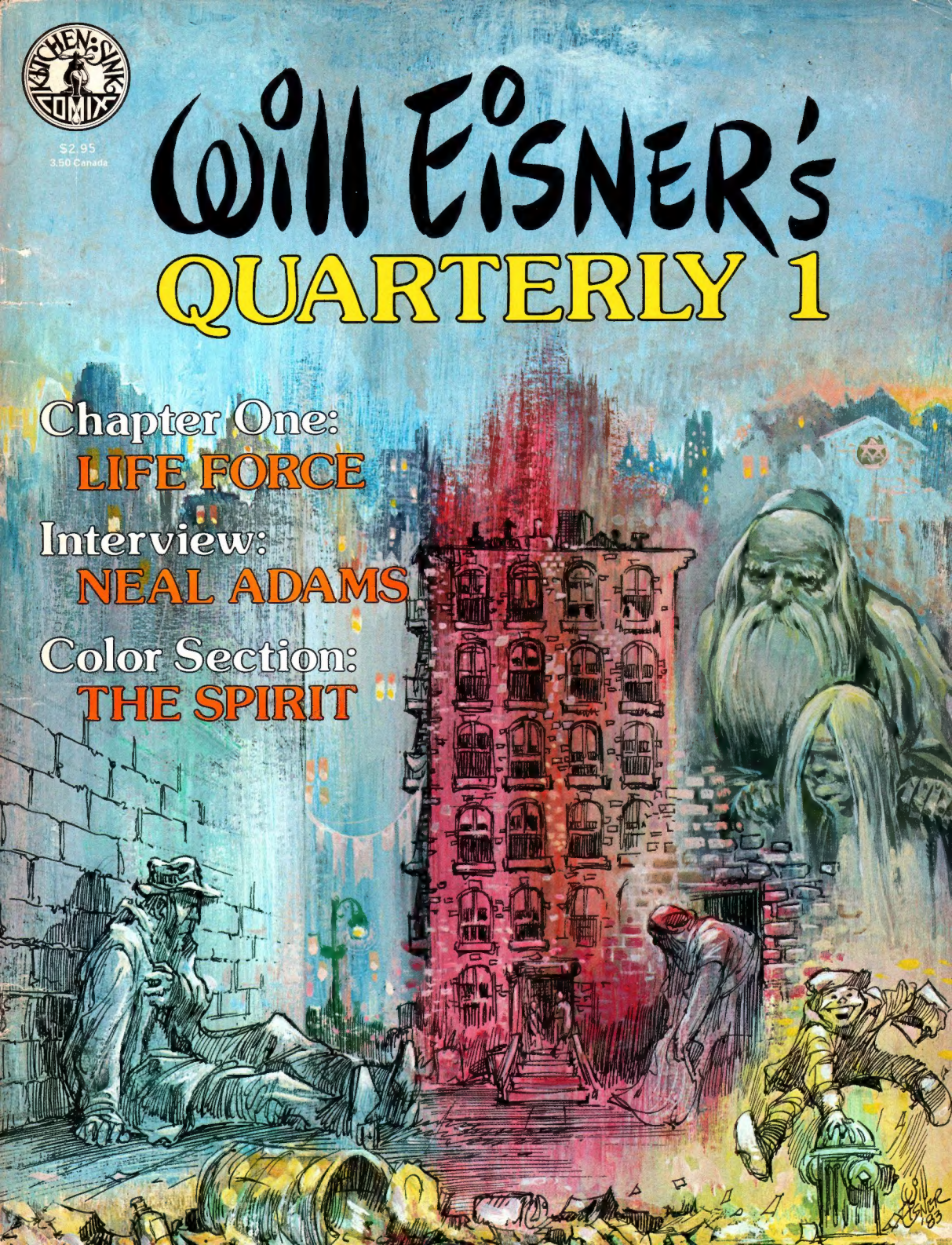
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Will Eisner's
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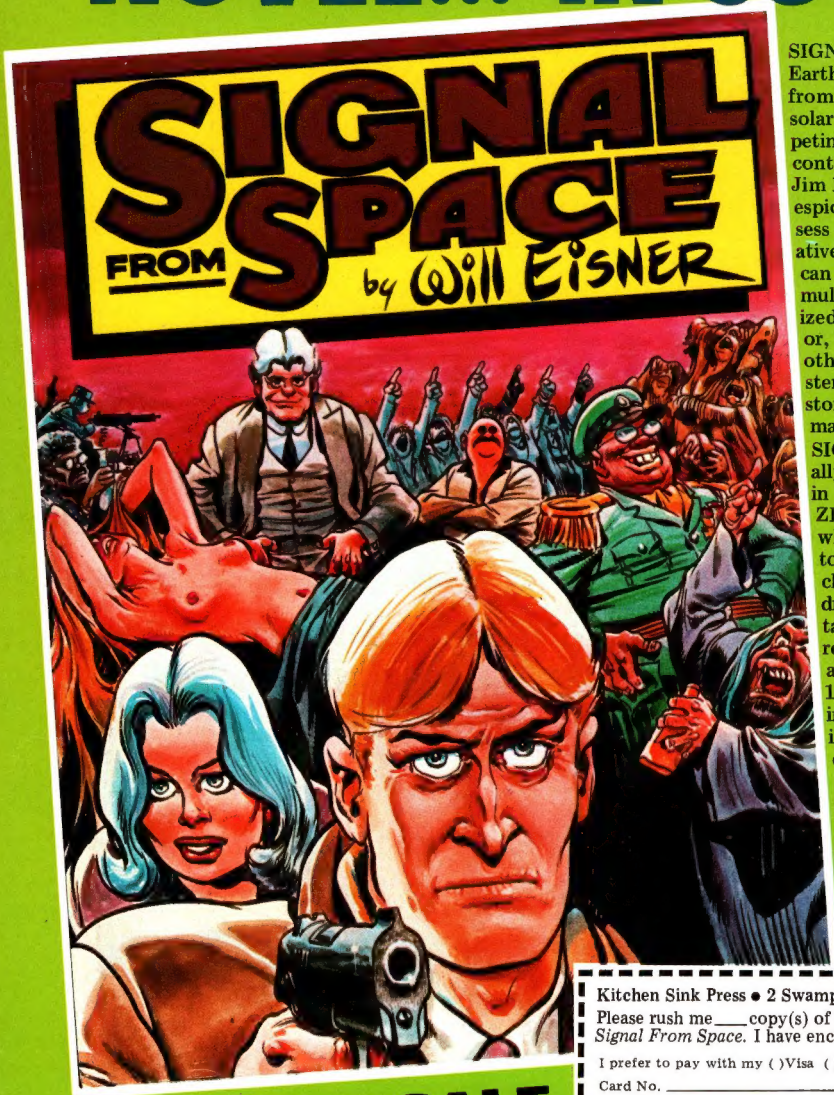

SIGNAL FROM SPACE tells how Earthmen react to receiving a signal from the planet Bernard in a distant solar system. In the tangle of competing groups trying to make first contact, one man emerges. He is Jim Bludd, scientist/adventurer/ex-espionage agent, who seeks to possess the key to sending a representative of Earth to Bernard. Before he can get it, he must contend with multi-national corporations, organized crime, a crazed African dictator, cults, the espionage agencies of other countries and other gangsters. This is a richly convoluted story, told in blunt terms, by a master storyteller.

SIGNAL FROM SPACE ran serially as "Life On Another Planet" in Will Eisner's SPIRIT MAGAZINE in 1978-80 in black and white. Eisner redrew and retouched much of the first two chapters. And Eisner, with Andre LeBlanc (a 1940s Spirit assistant) added COLOR to the already remarkable story. This is a big book (136 pgs, 8 3/4" x 11 7/8") with new Eisner paintings on both covers. Available in a deluxe hardcover edition only.

The Comics Journal's Dale Luciano called "Life On Another Planet" a "harrowing portrait of ruthlessness and corruption." The critic noted that Eisner addressed his themes with a "bolder expression of power" than ever before. "What's striking," he added, "is the extraordinary economy of visual means Eisner uses to advance the tale."

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Will Eisner's QUARTERLY 1

Will Eisner's Quarterly is one of two publications that grew from *Will Eisner's Spirit Magazine*. (The other is *The Spirit* comic book, a full-color bi-monthly.) This is the first issue and it contains:

A LIFE FORCE:
Thirty-three pages of new Will Eisner art continues the saga begun in *A Contract With God*. Visit 55 Dropsie Avenue, the Bronx, where an angel sometimes appears and miracles can happen. Page 3.

THE SPIRIT SECTION:
The Spirit shares the stage with Mr. Midnight, who enters and exits. Directed by Will Eisner. Mr. Mystic matches minds with an ancient beauty. Captured through the all-seeing eye of Bob Powell. Color section.

NEAL ADAMS INTERVIEW:
Will Eisner and Neal Adams cover it all — careers, philosophies, the comics industry, but not breakfast. Are eagles more important than bank robbers? Secrets revealed! Page 37.

No.1 WINTER 1983 ISSUE

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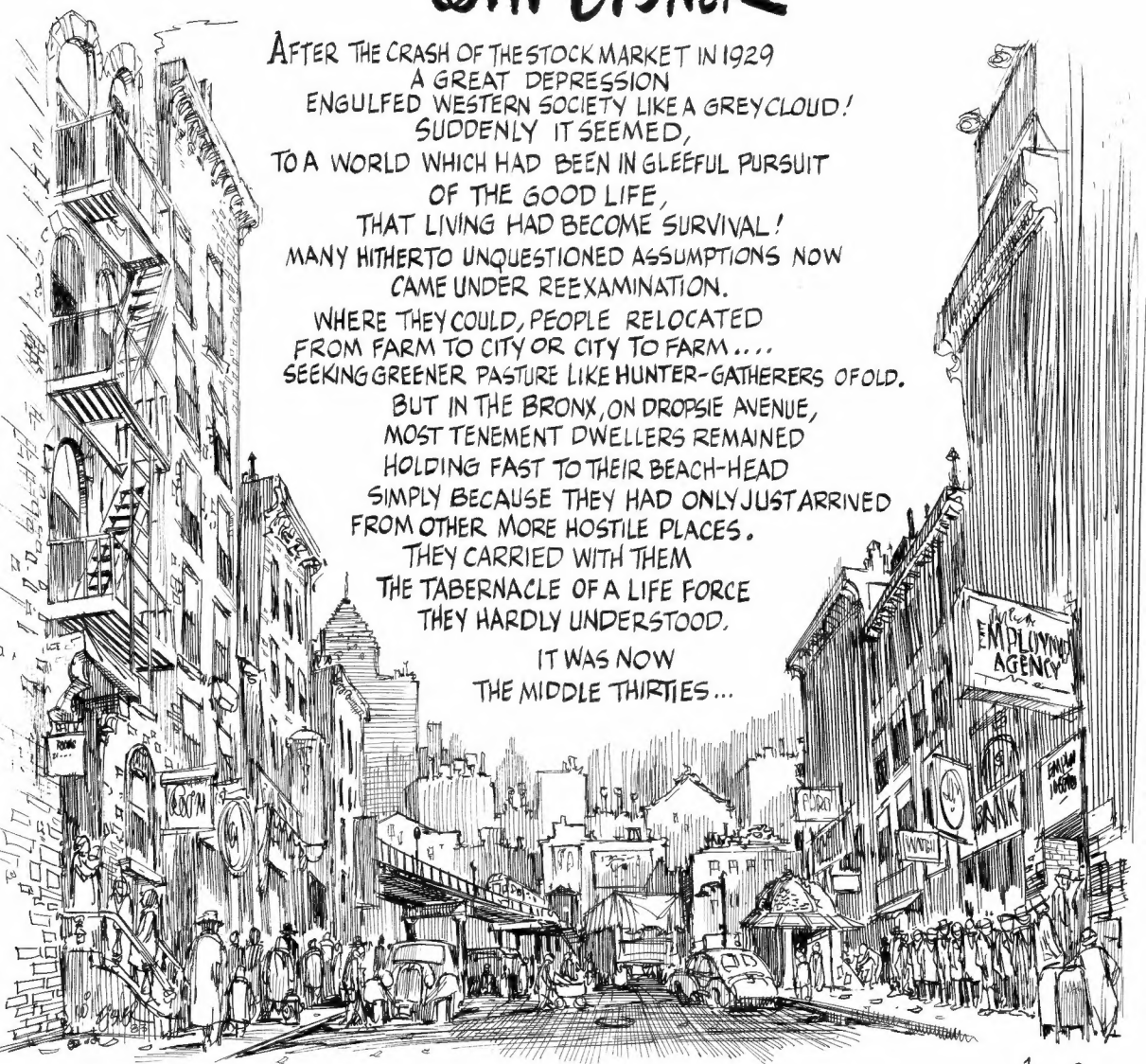
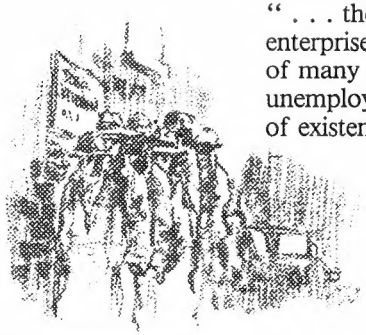
A Life Force

BY Will Eisner


AFTER THE CRASH OF THE STOCK MARKET IN 1929
A GREAT DEPRESSION
ENGULFED WESTERN SOCIETY LIKE A GREY CLOUD!
SUDDENLY IT SEEMED,
TO A WORLD WHICH HAD BEEN IN GLEEFUL PURSUIT
OF THE GOOD LIFE,
THAT LIVING HAD BECOME SURVIVAL!
MANY HITHERTO UNQUESTIONED ASSUMPTIONS NOW
CAME UNDER REEXAMINATION.
WHERE THEY COULD, PEOPLE RELOCATED
FROM FARM TO CITY OR CITY TO FARM....
SEEKING GREENER PASTURE LIKE HUNTER-GATHERERS OF OLD.
BUT IN THE BRONX, ON DROPSIE AVENUE,
MOST TENEMENT DWELLERS REMAINED
HOLDING FAST TO THEIR BEACH-HEAD
SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY HAD ONLY JUST ARRIVED
FROM OTHER MORE HOSTILE PLACES.
THEY CARRIED WITH THEM
THE TABERNACLE OF A LIFE FORCE
THEY HARDLY UNDERSTOOD.
IT WAS NOW
THE MIDDLE THIRTIES...
EMPLOYMENT AGENCY
BANK

1934 AND THE FORCES OF LIFE

ALL OVER THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH, HUMAN KIND, HAVING SUCCEEDED IN SUBDUING THE 'LOWER ORDER' OF SPECIES, TURNED ON THEMSELVES IN AN ATTEMPT TO MASTER THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FORCES THAT THREATENED THEM.



" . . . the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side . . . the savings of many thousands of families are gone . . . unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence. . . ."

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
From his first Inaugural Address

ITEMS FROM
THE NEW YORK PRESS

1500 HOMELESS LIVE IN ARMORY

69th REGIMENT HOUSES POOR

FEB. 7, 1934

Sheltered from the cold, over 1500 homeless people have found at least temporary refuge in the 69th Regiment Armory at Lexington Avenue and Twenty-Sixth Street in New York.

These victims of the depression, poorly clothed and dispirted, have been pouring into the huge building filling the drill floor and the mezzanine. Coming from the inclement pavements and wet doorways or dank subway kiosks, they encamp on the polished wooden floors.

SIMPLE GAMES OCCUPY THEIR TIME

In an effort to keep up morale,the men play checkers, jigsaw puzzles and hang around a piano played by a volunteer of surprising talent.

SLUMP CAN AFFECT PEOPLE'S HEALTH

INCREASE IN ILLNESS AND REDUCTION OF INCOME EFFECT.

In an article published on Jan. 14 by the *New York Times,* it was reported that the average annual income of a representative group of American wage-earners dropped from $1700 in 1929 to $900 this year.

The significance of the statistic is that historically an economic depression usually results in sickness and impaired vitality.

RATE OF DEATH SINCE 1929 HAS REDUCED

Strangely enough, the U.S. death rate has fallen despite the drop in living standards.

TWO MEN FAINT OF HUNGER IN CITY HALL WHILE WOMAN SCREAMS

MAYOR LA GUARDIA HALTS CONFERENCE

MARCH 2, 1934

According to the *New York Times,* two men in a group of twenty-two unemployed people besieged City Hall in the belief that the mayor would give them jobs in snow removal work, collapsed in the hall outside the Mayor's Office.

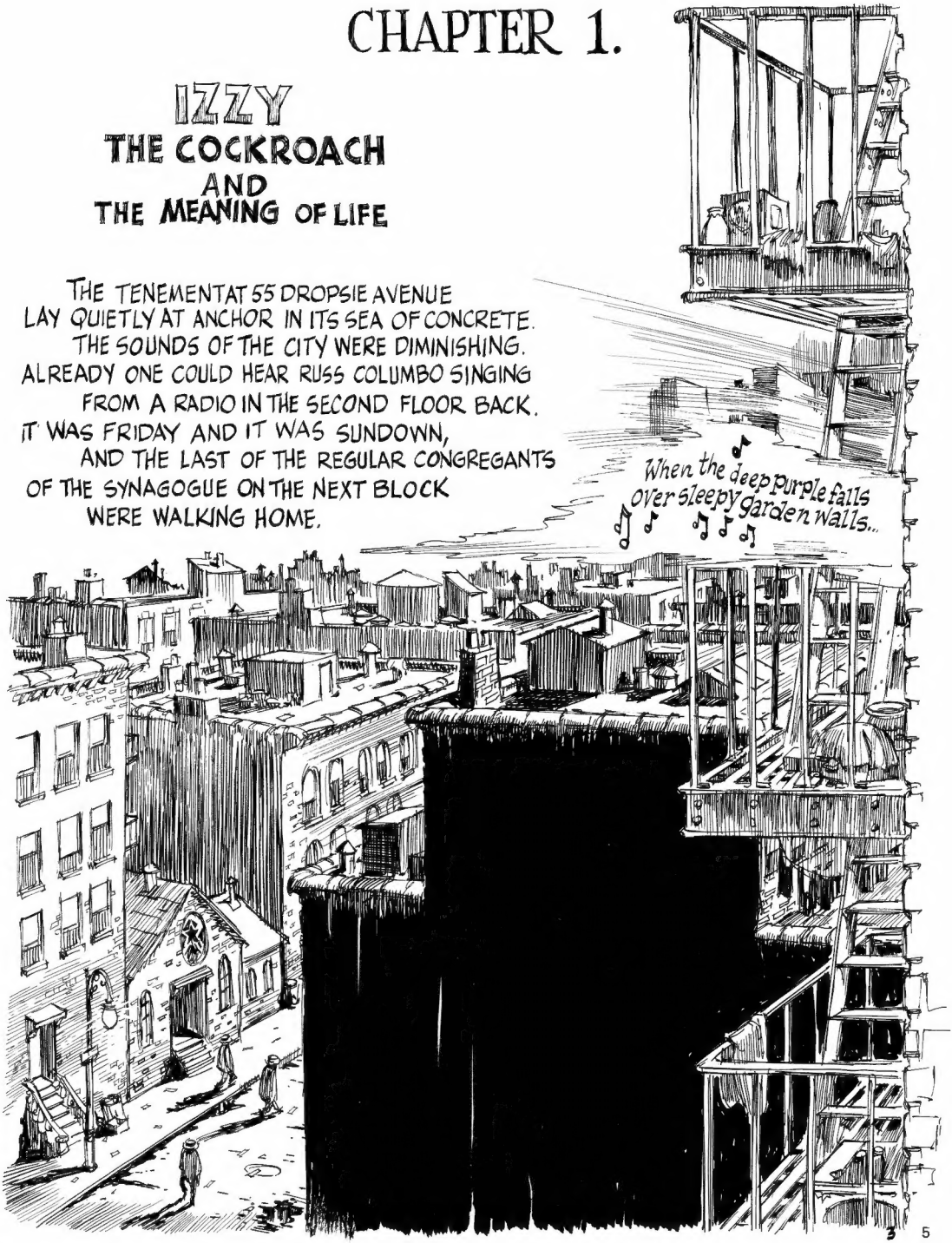
Both men, exhausted from lack of food, were immediately taken to the Beekman Street Hospital at Mayor Fiorello La Guardia's orders.

"WANT JOBS, NOT FOOD"

The men had worked the day before at snow clearing for the Sanitation Department until they were laid off for lack of work.

CHAPTER 1.

IZZY THE COCKROACH AND THE MEANING OF LIFE


THE TENEMENT AT 55 DROPSIE AVENUE
LAY QUIETLY AT ANCHOR IN ITS SEA OF CONCRETE.
THE SOUNDS OF THE CITY WERE DIMINISHING.
ALREADY ONE COULD HEAR RUSS COLUMBO SINGING
FROM A RADIO IN THE SECOND FLOOR BACK.
IT WAS FRIDAY AND IT WAS SUNDOWN,
AND THE LAST OF THE REGULAR CONGREGANTS
OF THE SYNAGOGUE ON THE NEXT BLOCK
WERE WALKING HOME.
When the deep purple falls
over sleepy garden walls...

AT THIS MOMENT THREE MINOR EVENTS OCCURRED
...ONE;
JACOB SHTARKAH FINALLY, IT SEEMED, CAME TO THE END OF HIS CAREER.
JACOB, JACOB... PLEASE DON'T MAKE SUCH A BIG TSIMMIS ABOUT THIS
BETH SHOLIM
BUT BENJAMIN I GAVE ALMOST FIVE YEARS OF MY LIFE TO BUILD THAT STUDY HALL ON THE SHUL... FIVE YEARS!! IT'S MY NEDOVA !!!
BE REASONABLE, JACOB! FIVE YEARS AGO YOU CAME TO US, IF YOU'LL PARDON ME, AN OLD CARPENTER WITH NOTHING TO DO! SO WE GAVE YOU A 'HOLY TASK'...TO BUILD FOR US A NEDOVA – SO, YOU DID, AND YOU MADE A BIG CAREER OUT OF IT.... WELL, NOW IT IS FINISHED!

WITH MY OWN TWO HANDS I BUILT IT! EVERY NAIL IN THAT BUILDING I HAMMERED! EVEN THE WALLS I PLASTERED!
TRUE, TRUE... BUT WHO PAID FOR IT? MORRIS GOLDFARB! ...IT WAS HIS DONATION THAT PAID YOU A SALARY, BOUGHT THE WOOD, BOUGHT THE LAND, EVERYTHING!
IT WILL BE CALLED, "THE YETTA AND MORRIS GOLDFARB STUDY HALL"
NO! NO!! IT'S NOT FAIR!
PLEASE, JACOB, PLEASE... ... YOU GOT A FIVE YEARS LIVING FROM IT!

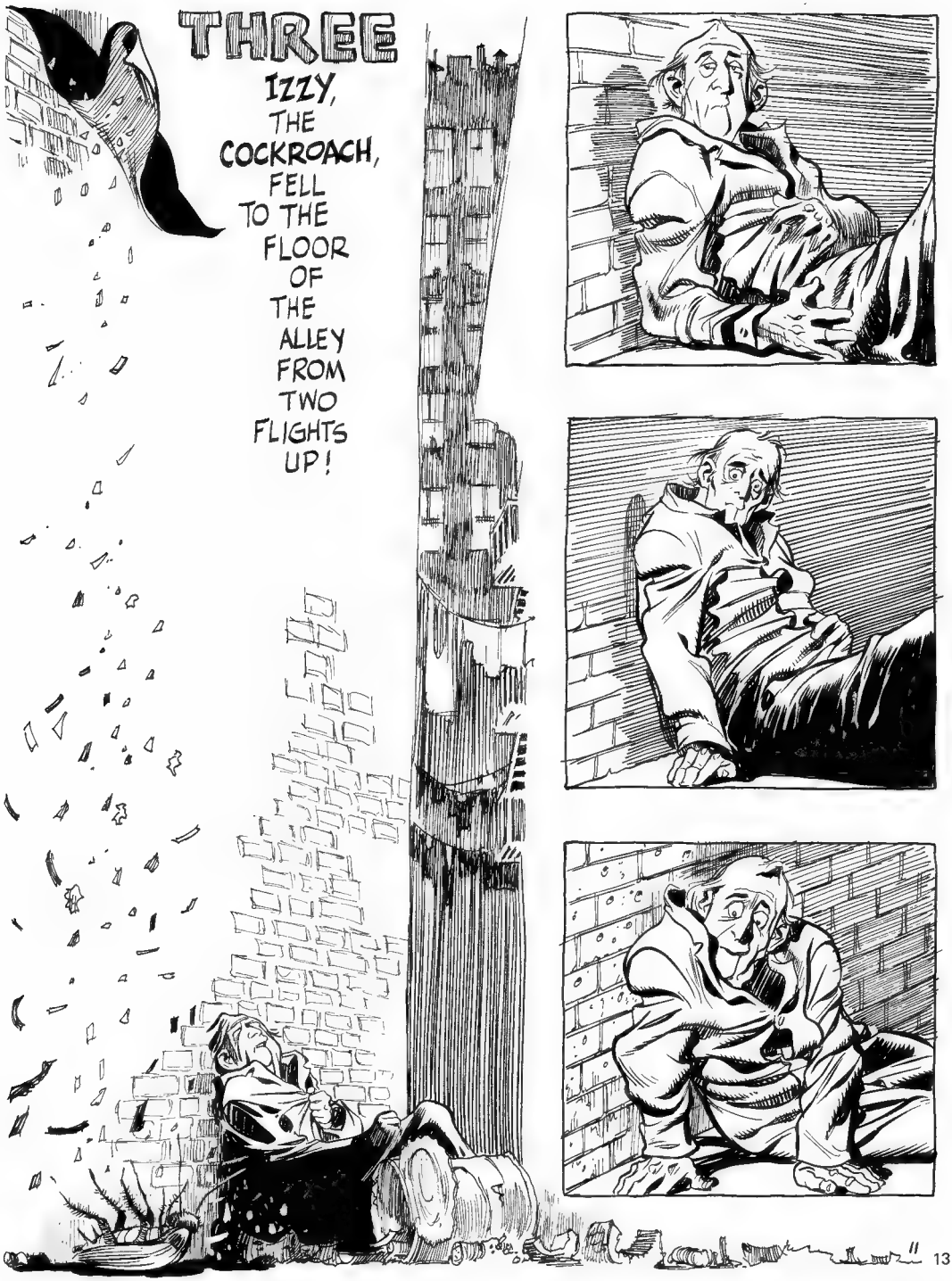
YOU MUST FACE REALITY JACOB... THE BUILDING COMMITTEE HAS DECIDED ONCE AND FOR ALL! P-E-R-I-O-D!
ME YOU GAVE FIVE YEARS, GOLDFARB YOU ARE GIVING IMMORTALITY !!

TAP TAP
NOO... JACOB.. WHAT ARE YOU STANDING AROUND FOR?? GO HOME! IT'S ALREADY SUNDOWN.
MAYBE YOU GOT ANOTHER BUILDING FOR ME TO BUILD?... SOME BENCHES, A CLOSET, MAYBE, FOR THE TFILLEN?
NOTHING, JACOB! NO OTHER PROJECTS. EVERYTHING IS DONE... WE DON'T NEED ANYTHING!
7.

GO, JACOB... GO TO LAKEWOOD... TAKE A REST... SIT IN THE SUN... YOU'RE ENTITLED... YOU WORKED HARD ALL YOUR LIFE
FIVE YEARS!

A LIFETIME OF WORKING! ... FOR WHAT, I ASK YOU...?!?!
OY-!! GOTTENOO! I CAN'T MOVE MY LEGS... MY CHEST HURTS ... OY-VEY I'M DYING!!

TWO...
RIFKA SHTARKAH PREPARED FOR THE SABBATH...
SO, WHERE IS JACOB? IT IS GETTING LATE, ALREADY!


THREE
IZZY, THE COCKROACH, FELL TO THE FLOOR OF THE ALLEY FROM TWO FLIGHTS UP!

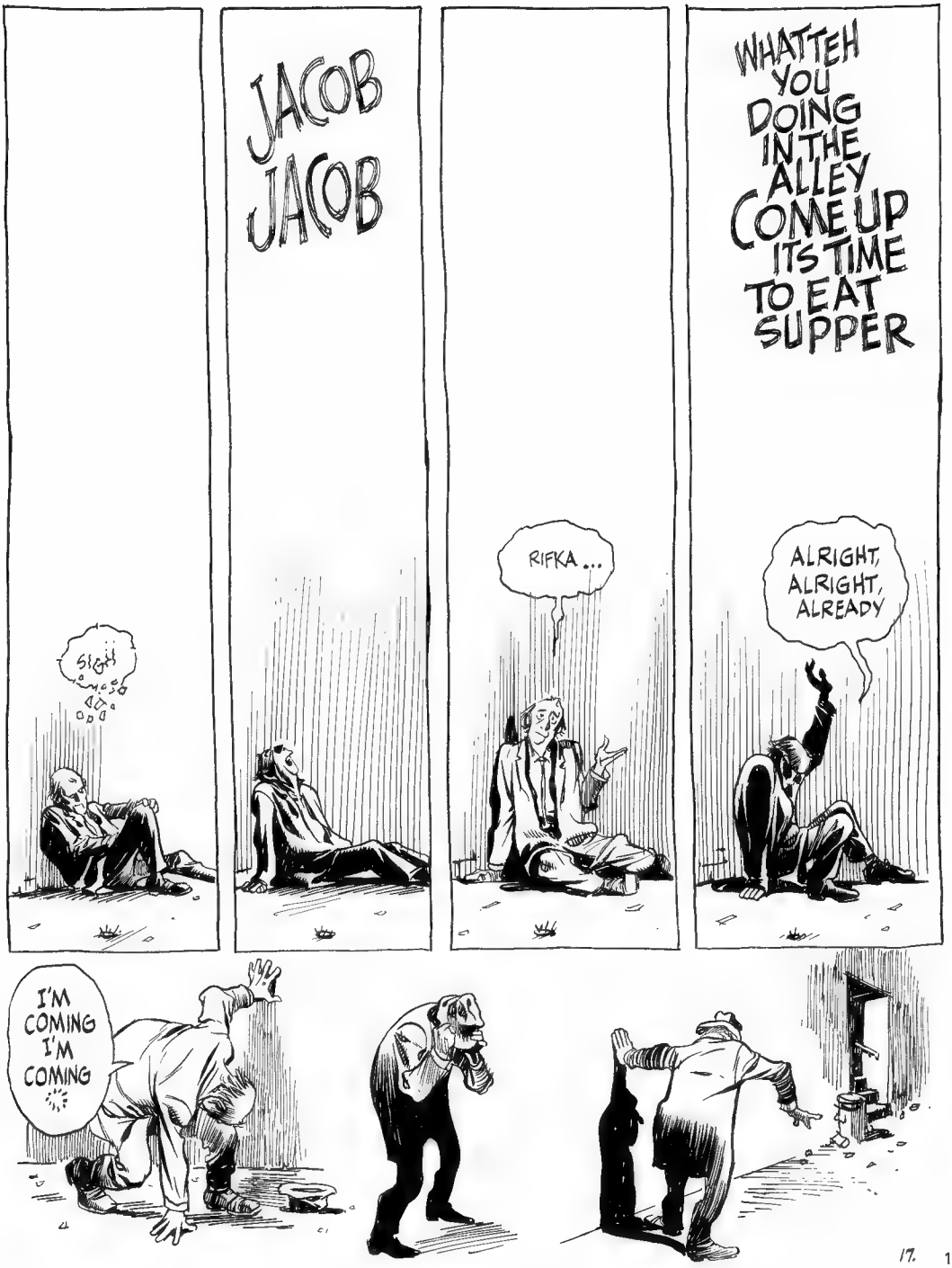
SO?? MISTER COCKROACH, WHAT ARE YOU STRUGGLING FOR?? TO MAYBE STAY ALIVE A FEW DAYS MORE ?
12

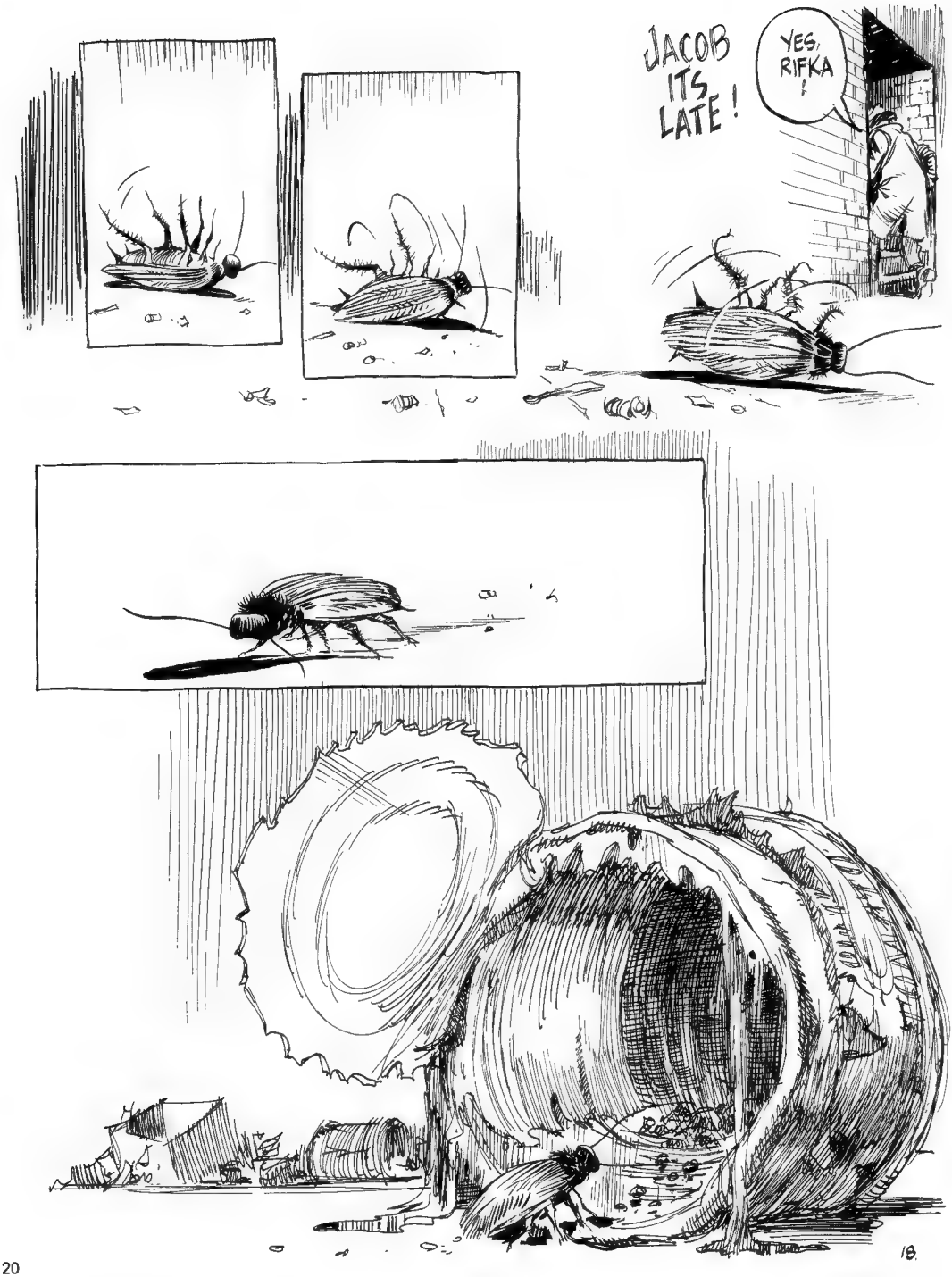
WELL... TO THE TELL THE TRUTH SO AM I TRYING TO STAY ALIVE!
SO, THEN, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US??
YOU... BEING ONLY A COCKROACH, JUST WANT TO LIVE! FOR YOU ITS ENOUGH! BUT ME... I HAVE TO ASK, WHY!?

WHY, WHY... WHO KNOWS WHY?! ...GOD??
WELL, THERE ARE ONLY TWO POSSIBILITIES!
EITHER, MAN CREATED GOD...OR, GOD CREATED MAN!

IF... MAN CREATED GOD...
... THEN, THE REASON FOR LIFE IS ONLY IN THE MIND OF THE LIVING!
...IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, GOD CREATED MAN...
THEN, THE REASON FOR LIVING IS STILL ONLY A GUESS!
BUT!!, ...AFTER ALL IS SAID AND DONE... JUST A GUESS!!!
WHO REALLY KNOWS THE WILL OF GOD??
... WELL, IN EITHER CASE, BOTH MAN AND COCKROACH ARE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE! BECAUSE STAYING ALIVE SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY THING ON WHICH EVERYBODY AGREES!

OY, YOY YOY...
CLOP CLOP
HEY, DON'T
LOOKOUT.. YOU GONNA STEP ON IT ...THAT... COCKA ROACH NO, NO!
WHA?... HEY
HEY, LEGGO MY LEG Y'OLD KOKKER !!!
SO, GO AHEAD HIT ME! ... ONE ZETZ AND... I'M... DEAD
SO, AT LEAST I'LL DIE FOR A REASON! ... THAT, AT LEAST, I CAN UNDERSTAND ...GO AHEAD, YOU BUM
AAAAAAEHHH OVER A COCK-A-ROACH I AINT GONNA KILL YA... CRAZY OLD FOOL!
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
16


SIGH!
JACOB
JACOB
RIFKA...
WHATTEH YOU DOING IN THE ALLEY COME UP ITS TIME TO EAT SUPPER
ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT, ALREADY
I'M COMING I'M COMING

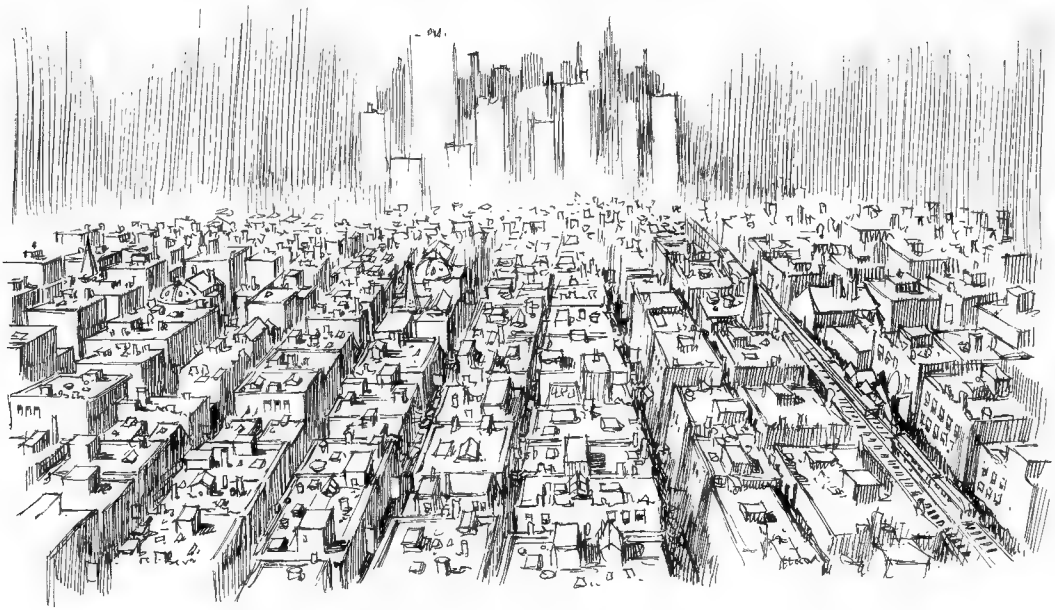

JACOB ITS LATE !
YES, RIFKA !
18.

JACOB, ARE YOU COMING UP??
YES, YES, I'M COMING... I'M COMING!
BORUCH ATOH ADONOI ELOHENU MELECH HA-OILOM ASHER KIDISHONU B'MITZVOISOV V'TZIVONU L'HADLIK NEIR SHEL SHABBES... JACOB, DID YOU WASH YOUR HANDS?
NU..., JACOB... SO, HOW WAS TODAY?
TODAY?? TODAY, I SAVED THE LIFE OF A COCKROACH!

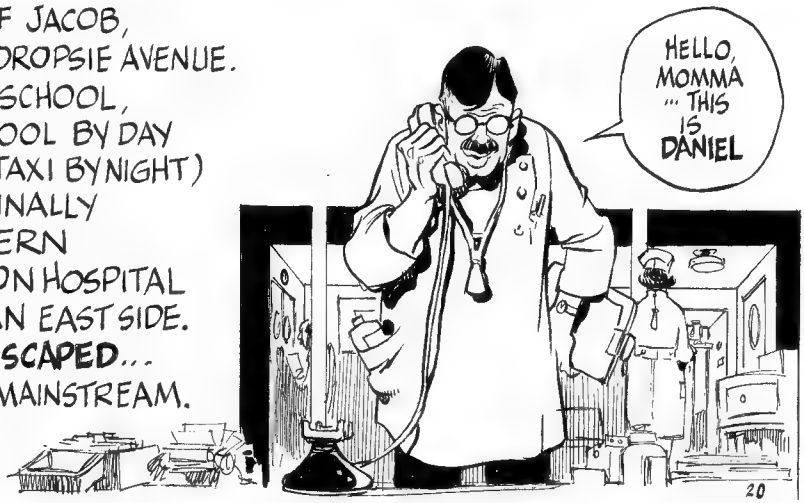
CHAPTER 2

ESCAPEE

SOUTH, SOUTHWEST- ACROSS THE HARLEM RIVER
WHERE THE BRONX ENDS, IS MANHATTAN ISLAND.
THERE...IS THE LAND OF PROMISE



DANIEL, SON OF JACOB,
MADE IT FROM DROPSIE AVENUE.
VIA NIGHT SCHOOL,
MEDICAL SCHOOL BY DAY
(DRIVING A TAXI BY NIGHT)
AND FINALLY
AN INTERN
AT MT. HEBRON HOSPITAL
MANHATTAN EAST SIDE.
DANIEL HAD **ESCAPED**...
INTO THE MAINSTREAM.



LISTEN, MOMMA... I'M ON DUTY, SO I CAN'T TALK LONG! I JUST CALLED TO FIND OUT HOW YOU ARE ...HOW'S POPPA?
NO... I CAN'T COME HOME FOR SUPPER ... I KNOW ITS FRIDAY! WELL, FOR ONE THING, I'VE GOT TO DO SOME RESEARCH... GOT A LIVER PATIENT WHO NEEDS.....
NO! I CAN'T DO IT LATER ... AND... BESIDES, THERES THERESA, SHE...
SO, AFTER ALL MY YEARS OF SLAVING, DOING WITHOUT, MY SON, DANIEL-THE-DOCTOR CAN'T EVEN COME HOME FOR SUPPER ON FRIDAY THIS IS MY REWARD ??
BUT MOMMA ?
21

NOW, MOMMA, YOU KNOW WHY I CAN'T COME! ...YOU TOLD ME NEVER TO BRING THERESA INTO YOUR HOUSE
SO? WHAT'S A MADDER?? YOU CAN'T COME ALONE? SO, MAYBE, YOU CAN'T WALK WITHOUT HER ?
DANIEL I DON'T WANT TO HEAR FROM THAT SHIKSEH
BUT, MOMMA, WE'RE ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED ..... MOMMA ?!?
HELLO? MOMMA ?!
MOMMA MOMMA WHAT'S WRONG ?! ANSWER ME
MOMMA !! WHAT HAPPENED ?!?
NOTHING, DANIEL ... JUST ONE OF MY ATTACKS... I'M A LITTLE BETTER NOW!

(continued on page 54)

WEEKLY COMIC BOOK

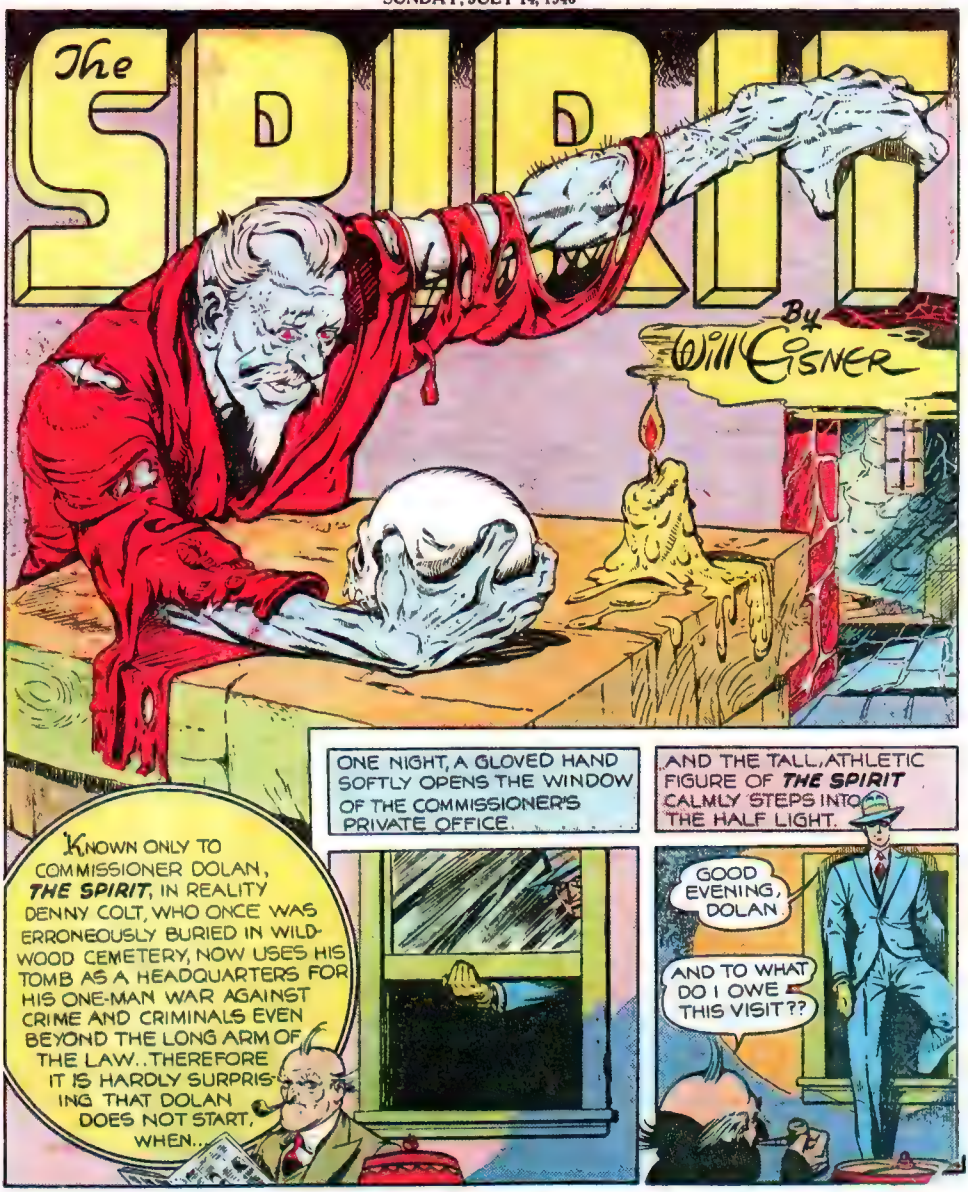
The Detroit News
THE HOME NEWSPAPER

3 COMPLETE STORIES

SUNDAY, JULY 14, 1940

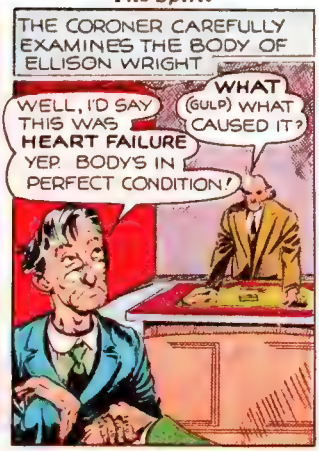
The SPIRIT

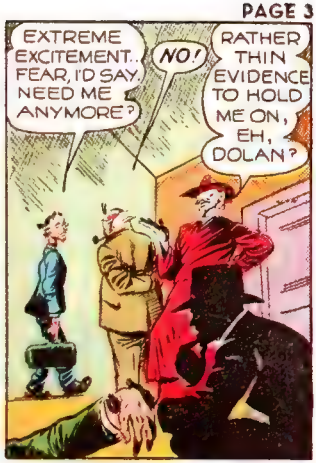
By Will Eisner


ONE NIGHT, A GLOVED HAND SOFTLY OPENS THE WINDOW OF THE COMMISSIONER'S PRIVATE OFFICE.
AND THE TALL, ATHLETIC FIGURE OF THE SPIRIT CALMLY STEPS INTO THE HALF LIGHT.
KNOWN ONLY TO COMMISSIONER DOLAN, THE SPIRIT, IN REALITY DENNY COLT, WHO ONCE WAS ERRONEOUSLY BURIED IN WILDWOOD CEMETERY, NOW USES HIS TOMB AS A HEADQUARTERS FOR HIS ONE-MAN WAR AGAINST CRIME AND CRIMINALS EVEN BEYOND THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW..THEREFORE IT IS HARDLY SURPRISING THAT DOLAN DOES NOT START, WHEN..
GOOD EVENING, DOLAN
AND TO WHAT DO I OWE THIS VISIT??

TO THIS.. I FOUND IT IN THE PUBLIC NOTICES!
TO HIM WHO CALLS HIMSELF THE SPIRIT, You are cordially invited to attend the murder of Ellison Wright, in Commissioner Dolan's office at midnight tonight. signed... Mr. Midnight.
A CRANK PROBABLY NO ONE IN HIS RIGHT MIND WOULD TRY A THING LIKE THAT!
REALLY?
AH, PERMIT ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF I AM MR. MIDNIGHT. I HOPE I HAVEN'T INCONVENIENCED YOU, MR. SPIRIT!
WHAT IS ALL THIS THIRD RATE MOVIE STUFF?
IN EXACTLY TEN MINUTES MR. WRIGHT WILL BE HERE
HE WILL GIVE ME A SET OF LETTERS.. HE WILL THEN SIGN A PAPER ADMITTING THAT HE BLACKMAILED ME FOR YEARS, UPON WHICH I WILL MURDER HIM BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES!
THE NEXT TEN MINUTES PASS WITH THE SLOWNESS OF INEXORABLE FATE. NO ONE IN THE "MURDER AUDIENCE" MOVES. .... THEIR EYES FIXED, HYPNOTIZED BY THE TICKING CLOCK HANDS
AT EXACTLY 10 MINUTES TO TWELVE..
HERE ARE YOUR PAPERS, YOU FIEND, ONLY DON'T.. PLEASE DON'T KILL ME!
THANK YOU, MR. WRIGHT, YOU'RE ON TIME MAY I BORROW YOUR PEN, COMMISSIONER?
NOW, ELLISON, SIGN THIS CONFESSION. AH.. THAT'S RIGHT.
GASP
DEAD!

HELLO, O'MALLEY? PUT A DETAIL OUTSIDE THIS OFFICE AND SEND UP 'HAPPY,' THE CORONER.
MR. MIDNIGHT, YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!


THE CORONER CAREFULLY EXAMINES THE BODY OF ELLISON WRIGHT
WELL, I'D SAY THIS WAS HEART FAILURE
WHAT (GULP) WHAT CAUSED IT?
YEP. BODY'S IN PERFECT CONDITION!

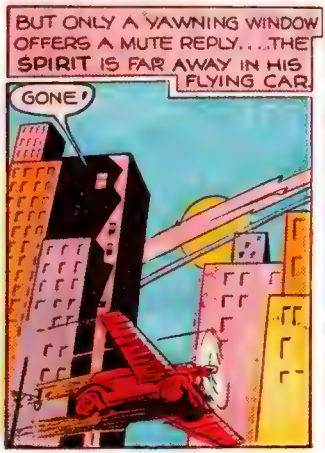

EXTREME EXCITEMENT.. FEAR, I'D SAY. NEED ME ANYMORE?
NO!
RATHER THIN EVIDENCE TO HOLD ME ON, EH, DOLAN?

A NEAT PIECE OF WORK, MR. MIDNIGHT!
I RATHER THOUGHT YOU'D APPRECIATE IT! I READ ALL ABOUT YOU, SPIRIT. ALWAYS WANTED TO MATCH WITS WITH YOU.. ER.. MAY I GO NOW, DOLAN?
NOTHING TO HOLD YOU ON. HOW ABOUT RETURNING MY PEN?

WAIT, DOLAN! DON'T TOUCH THAT PEN!
HA HA HA! CLEVER, SPIRIT... CLEVER, BUT I TOOK THE PRECAUTION TO BORROW DOLAN'S PEN FOR THE CONFESSION.. THERE'S NOTHING IN THAT!

GOOD DAY, GENTLEMEN. HA HA HA HA! CURTAIN.. ACT 3.. EXIT THE VILLAIN LAUGHING!
YOUR ERROR, MR. MIDNIGHT, ACT ONE!

WELL, CAN YOU BEAT THAT? WALKS RIGHT INTO POLICE HEADQUARTERS, MURDERS A MAN AND WALKS OUT SCOT FREE! WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, SPIRIT?


BUT ONLY A YAWNING WINDOW OFFERS A MUTE REPLY.... THE SPIRIT IS FAR AWAY IN HIS FLYING CAR
GONE!

THIS IS THE TOUGHEST SPOT THE POLICE HAVE EVER BEEN PUT IN!

WITH THE DRAMA OF A RISING "LAST ACT" CURTAIN, DAWN PAINTS HESITATING STREAKS ACROSS THE NIGHT SKY, AS THE MOON RELUCTANTLY SEEKS REFUGE UNDER THE RETREATING NIGHT. . ROARING UP THE NEGLECTED DRIVEWAY TO AN ANCIENT MANSION, MR MIDNIGHT'S CAR COMES TO A SCREECHING HALT BEFORE THE PORCH . . .

TAKE THE CAR INTO THE GARAGE, BEPPO I'M GOING TO MY STUDY!

UP DARK, WINDING STAIRS TO A HALF LIT STUDY. .

AH! HOW LONG HAVE I WAITED FOR THIS MOMENT! WREAKED MY VENGEANCE ON ELLISON AND DEFEATED THE **SPIRIT**!

ONLY **ELUDED THE SPIRIT**, MR. MIDNIGHT! THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF THE LAST ACT!

THE **SPIRIT**! HOW?

EASY, MR. **JOHN CALIBAN**, ALIAS MR MIDNIGHT! EASY! AFTER I DISCOVERED THE **TINY SCRATCH** THAT DIDN'T **BLEED**. . MUD ON YOUR SHOES . YOU SAID YOU CAME FROM THE COUNTRY AND I FOLLOWED YOU IN MY AUTOPLANE GETTING IN WAS SIMPLE YOU'VE NO SERVANTS

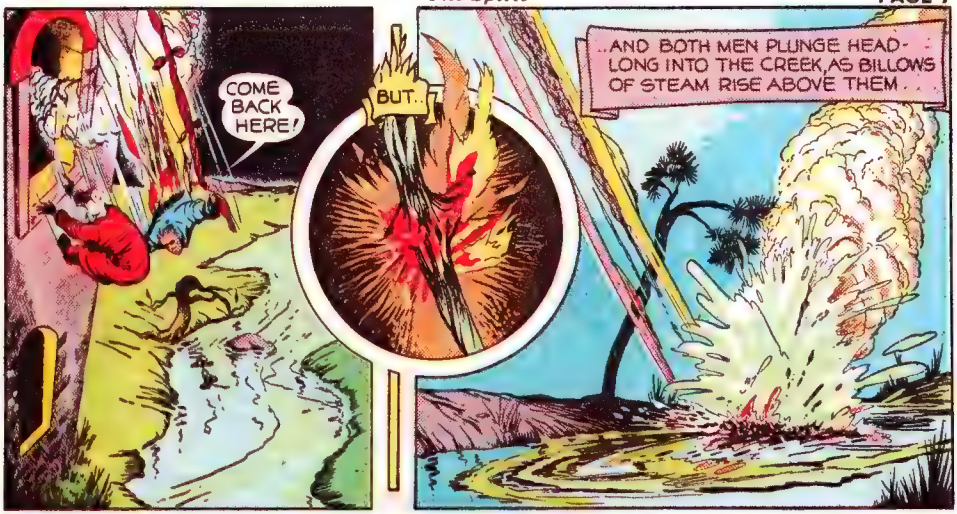
HA HA! VERY WELL . . YOU'VE FOUND ME OUT. WON'T YOU SIT DOWN AND PLAY A BIT OF CHESS? Y'KNOW I'VE ALWAYS ADMIRED YOU, **SPIRIT**!

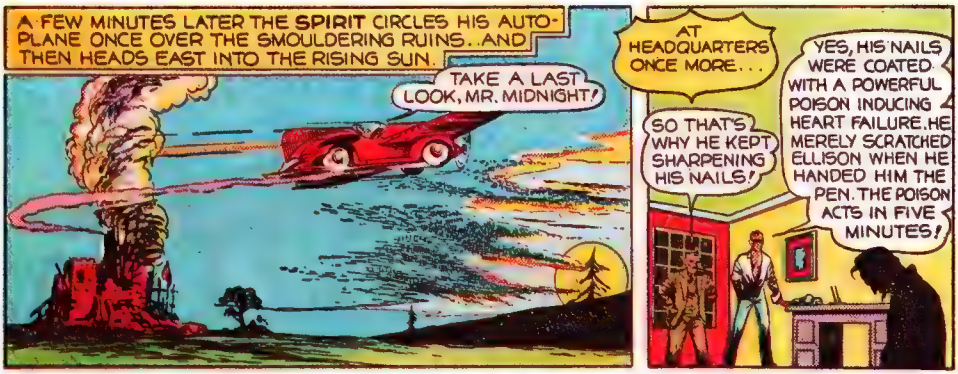
. NOT SO LONG AGO THE GREAT NAME OF JOHN CALIBAN WAS MAGIC ON BROADWAY. "THE GREAT LOVER" AH. YES! GIRLS SWOONED AT MY PROFILE . THEN MY CASTLE CRASHED! I FELL IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER MAN'S WIFE . IT RUINED ME . NEVER MIND HER NAME! ELLISON GOT HOLD OF SOME LETTERS I ONCE FOOLISHLY WROTE AND BLACKMAILED ME!

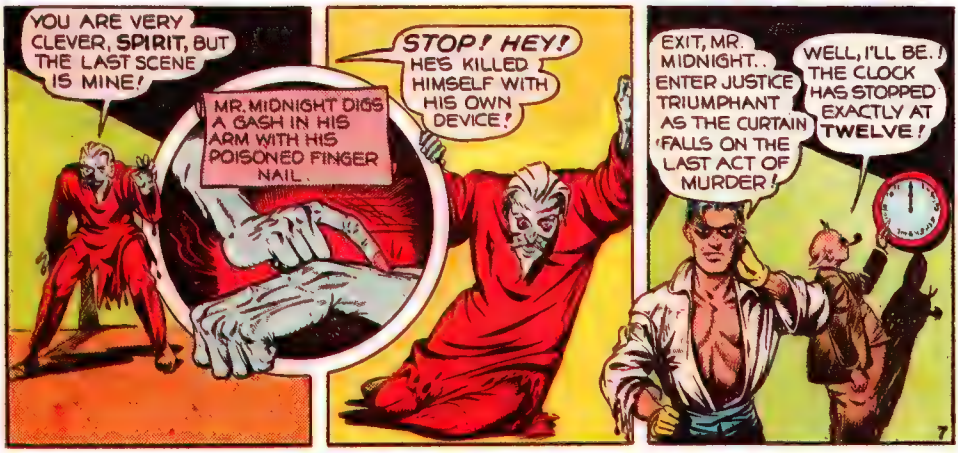
THEN MY SKIN, POISONED BY THE COSMETICS TURNED BLUE IT WAS THEN I CONCEIVED THE IDEA OF MR. MIDNIGHT. I KILLED **HER** AND DROPPED HER BODY IN THE RIVER. THEN CAME ELLISON WRIGHT HE WAS THE CAUSE OF MY POVERTY!

HORRIBLE, MIDNIGHT, YOU'RE NOTHING BUT AN ORDINARY KILLER! I'M TAKING YOU IN.
YORICK, DO YOU HEAR HIM? I'VE PLAYED EVERY ROLE, BUT NOW I PLAY MR. MIDNIGHT TO THE END!
MR. MIDNIGHT'S FACE SETS IN HATE
AFTER ALL, I REALLY HAVEN'T COMMITTED A PERFECT CRIME IF YOU ARE ALIVE TO BEAR WITNESS
THEN I'M TO GATHER, YOU WISH TO KILL ME, TOO?
YOU ARE QUICK TO GET THE IDEA..
NO MOVE!
YOU FORGET MY ONLY SERVANT BEPPO!
AND YOU FORGET MY JIU JITSU, PAL!
OFF BALANCE, THE SPIRIT IS EASY PREY TO A HARD UPPERCUT..
HA HA HA! AND THAT'S THAT!
WE'LL SET FIRE TO THIS PLACE, BEPPO.. HA-HAAA!
LAST ACT.. HA! MR. MIDNIGHT DEFEATS JUSTICE AND THE CURTAIN COMES DOWN IN A BLAZE OF GLORY...
THE SPIRIT!
YES, AND I'M CALLING FOR AN ENCORE!

FOR A LITTLE GUY, YOU SURE CAN SCRAP!
THE SPIRITS BACK IS TURNED.. MR. MIDNIGHT IS QUICK TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY. HE HURLS "YORICK" WITH TELLING EFFECT.
NOW WE'LL FIRE THE REST OF THE HOUSE!
LEAVING THE UNCONSCIOUS SPIRIT, THE TWO HURRY THROUGH THE CORRIDORS
HURRY, BEPPO! HURRY! THE ROOF!
FLAMING DEBRIS SHOWERS FROM ABOVE..AN INSTANT LATER THE ROOF COLLAPSES.
YAAAAAA
POOR BEPPO.. HE WAS TOO SLOW!
BACK SOMEWHERE IN THE FLAMES, THE SPIRIT RECOVERS HIS SENSES.
I'VE GOT TO CAPTURE HIM..HE'S GONE MURDER-MAD! I MUST.
WHEW! THAT WAS CLOSE!
CRASH!
GOOD GOSH! HE'S GOING BACK INTO THE FLAMES! ONLY ONE CHANCE! I CAN MAKE A LONG ROPE OF THESE CURTAINS!
HA HA! COULD IT BE I'M GOING MAD?..THE FLAMES! THEY FASCINATE ME!
HERE GOES!
LIKE A BLAZING COMET, THE SPIRIT, HIS CLOTHES AFLAME, HURTLES DOWNWARD WITH INCREDIBLE SPEED.


COME BACK HERE!
BUT..
..AND BOTH MEN PLUNGE HEAD-LONG INTO THE CREEK, AS BILLOWS OF STEAM RISE ABOVE THEM . . .


A FEW MINUTES LATER THE SPIRIT CIRCLES HIS AUTO-PLANE ONCE OVER THE SMOULDERING RUINS..AND THEN HEADS EAST INTO THE RISING SUN.
TAKE A LAST LOOK, MR. MIDNIGHT!
AT HEADQUARTERS ONCE MORE...
SO THAT'S WHY HE KEPT SHARPENING HIS NAILS!
YES, HIS NAILS WERE COATED WITH A POWERFUL POISON INDUCING HEART FAILURE. HE MERELY SCRATCHED ELLISON WHEN HE HANDED HIM THE PEN. THE POISON ACTS IN FIVE MINUTES!


YOU ARE VERY CLEVER, SPIRIT, BUT THE LAST SCENE IS MINE!
MR. MIDNIGHT DIGS A GASH IN HIS ARM WITH HIS POISONED FINGER NAIL.
STOP! HEY! HE'S KILLED HIMSELF WITH HIS OWN DEVICE!
EXIT, MR. MIDNIGHT.. ENTER JUSTICE TRIUMPHANT AS THE CURTAIN FALLS ON THE LAST ACT OF MURDER!
WELL, I'LL BE..! THE CLOCK HAS STOPPED EXACTLY AT TWELVE!
7

Mr. MYSTIC

by W. MORGAN THOMAS

ENDOWED WITH VAST SUPERNATURAL POWERS, MR. MYSTIC STEADILY CARRIES ON HIS WAR AGAINST EVIL.. GOVERNED BY A MYSTERIOUS COUNCIL OF SEVEN LAMAS, HE RECEIVES AN ORDER BY TELEPATHY TO GO TO AFRICA

IN ONE OF THE MANY SMALL SIDEWALK CAFES IN DAKAR, MR. MYSTIC ENJOYS A COCKTAIL WITH A FRIEND.

LOOK! THERE'S THE ROLLINS SAFARI.. I HEAR THEY'RE TAKING ALMOST A MILLION DOLLARS IN GOLD TO STANLEYVILLE!

THEY. OH, DEAR! HOW CLUMSY OF ME TO SPILL THE SALT!. W-WHA!! MR. MYSTIC, LOOK! LOOK!

THE AMULET OF RA WHOSE WEARER SHALL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE AND WHO SHALL BE INVULNERABLE TO ALL BODILY HARM!

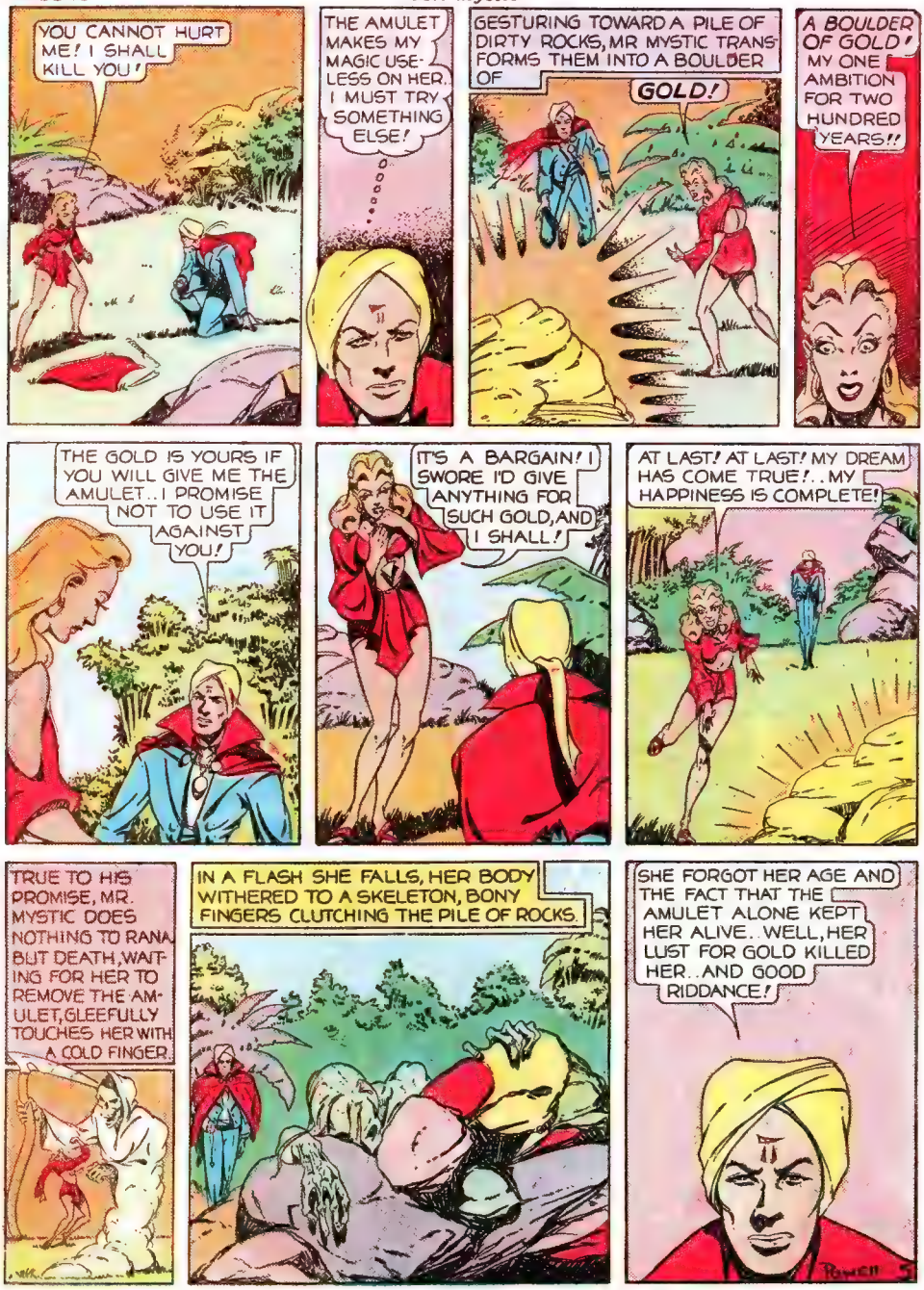
I MUST GO AT ONCE! PLEASE EXCUSE ME, AND THANK YOU FOR A LOVELY AFTERNOON

WELL, OF ALL THINGS! THAT'S WHAT I GET FOR HAVING A DATE WITH A MAGICIAN!

ALONE, MR MYSTIC SETS OUT FOR THE VILLAGE OF THE FABLED TWO HUNDRED YEAR OLD QUEEN RANA.
SPOTTING A HUGE FLOCK OF VULTURES, MR MYSTIC INVESTIGATES AND FINDS THE REMAINS OF AN AMBUSHED SAFARI.
THE ROLLINS' EXPEDITION! GOOD GOSH! THERE'S NOT A SOUL LEFT ALIVE! THE GOLD SHIPMENT IS GONE, TOO!
B-BWANA! WE ATTACKED BY QUEEN RANA'S WARRIORS! THEY TAKE GOLD!
GASP
SHE B-BAD. OOOOH!
POOR CHAP, HE'S GONE!
SO THE QUEEN IS UP TO HER OLD TRICKS OF STEALING GOLD! I'VE GOT TO STOP HER ONCE AND FOR ALL!
MEANWHILE..
LOOK, OH QUEEN! WE BRING GOLD!
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, M'GANGA, BUT I STILL AM NOT SATISFIED!
FOR TWO HUNDRED YEARS, I'VE THIRSTED FOR A HUGE ROCK OF GOLD.. I'D GIVE ANYTHING FOR IT, ANYTHING!
PUT THIS AWAY WITH THE REST! I SHALL COUNT IT LATER!
UNOBSERVED BY THE OTHERS, MR MYSTIC'S SCENT REACHES THE SENSITIVE NOSTRILS OF RANA'S GIANT PET LION.

WHEELING ABOUT, HE CHARGES FOR MR. MYSTIC'S HIDING PLACE.
IN ONE GIANT BOUND, HE LEAPS OVER THE CONCEALING FOLIAGE.. IN A FLASH, MR. MYSTIC CHANGES INTO A SMALL ROCK.
?
SUDDENLY, MUCH TO THE LION'S AMAZEMENT, THE ROCK JUMPS AWAY. . . .
WARY AND SUSPICIOUS, THE LION EDGES UP TO IT AND EYES IT CAUTIOUSLY. . .
LASHING OUT WITH A PAW, HE TOUCHES THE STONE WHICH IMMEDIATELY SHOOTS INTO THE AIR..
AND CRASHES DOWN ON THE BEAST'S HEAD, KNOCKING HIM OUT..
QUICKLY ROLLING UP HILL, THE BOULDER CROSSES THE VILLAGE GREEN AND BOUNCES TO A STOP AT THE QUEEN'S FEET. . .
AM I DREAMING?! I CAN'T EVEN BELIEVE WHAT I HAVE SEEN! THE STONE IS BEWITCHED!!
THE STONE IS NOT A STONE, BUT YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT, MR. MYSTIC!
3

YOU DARE TO MAKE A FOOL OF ME?! YOU FORGET I AM RANA, INVINCIBLE AND ETERNAL!
SEIZE HIM! MY WARRIORS, HE IS NAUGHT BUT A FAKIR!
AS THE MEN LUNGE FORWARD, MR. MYSTIC VANISHES IN A CLOUD OF SMOKE, AND IN HIS PLACE ARISES A HIDEOUS MONSTER BREATHING TONGUES OF FLAME.
HA! HA! LOOK AT THEM RUN! HYPNOTISM IS A HANDY WEAPON!
YOUR TRICKS MAY SCARE MY MEN, BUT THEY HAVE NO EFFECT ON ME! I WILL KILL YOU!
KNOWING SHE CAN'T BE HARMED BECAUSE OF THE AMULET OF RA HANGING ABOUT HER NECK, THE GIRL RUSHES FORWARD AND KNOCKS THE SURPRISED MAGICIAN OFF HIS FEET.
BEFORE HE CAN REGAIN HIS FEET, RANA GRABS UP A FALLEN MACHETE.
AS SHE RUSHES AT HIM, MR. MYSTIC GESTURES, BUT NOTHING HAPPENS.
JUST IN TIME, HE ROLLS AWAY FROM THE QUEEN'S VICIOUS SWIPE THAT SNAPS THE BLADE IN TWO AND CUTS HIS CAPE IN HALF. . .


YOU CANNOT HURT ME! I SHALL KILL YOU!
THE AMULET MAKES MY MAGIC USELESS ON HER. I MUST TRY SOMETHING ELSE!
GESTURING TOWARD A PILE OF DIRTY ROCKS, MR MYSTIC TRANSFORMS THEM INTO A BOULDER OF GOLD!
A BOULDER OF GOLD! MY ONE AMBITION FOR TWO HUNDRED YEARS!!
THE GOLD IS YOURS IF YOU WILL GIVE ME THE AMULET.. I PROMISE NOT TO USE IT AGAINST YOU!
IT'S A BARGAIN! I SWORE I'D GIVE ANYTHING FOR SUCH GOLD, AND I SHALL!
AT LAST! AT LAST! MY DREAM HAS COME TRUE!.. MY HAPPINESS IS COMPLETE!
TRUE TO HIS PROMISE, MR. MYSTIC DOES NOTHING TO RANA BUT DEATH, WAITING FOR HER TO REMOVE THE AMULET, GLEEFULLY TOUCHES HER WITH A COLD FINGER
IN A FLASH SHE FALLS, HER BODY WITHERED TO A SKELETON, BONY FINGERS CLUTCHING THE PILE OF ROCKS.
SHE FORGOT HER AGE AND THE FACT THAT THE AMULET ALONE KEPT HER ALIVE. WELL, HER LUST FOR GOLD KILLED HER.. AND GOOD RIDDANCE!
POWELL

SHOP TALK
NOW, LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT... YOU'RE NEAL ADAMS DRESSED AS WHO??
S'IDEAS, WILL...UH...MISTER EISNER. I GET 'EM FROM THE...UH STRANGEST PLACES... YA KNOW?
NEAL ADAMS!

NEAL ADAMS

This interview was conducted June 23, 1983, at Neal Adams' newly-constructed studio. The interview took place in Adams' office, a glass-enclosed turret-like room from which he can watch other artists at work.

EISNER: Neal, I've always been vague on where to place you within the spectrum of comic book artists. I think you fall somewhere between me—the 2,000 year old cartoonist—and young Frank Miller. *(Eisner/Adams together: Somewhere in the middle there, you/I fit).* So tell me when you started?

ADAMS: In 1959; I did work for Archie Comics. I tried to get work at DC; I didn't try at Timely [Marvel]—I had heard of Timely. I tried to get work with Joe Simon at Archie Comics. I was just out of high school, and I didn't have enough money for college, and I knew I had to make it coming out of high school. So I got good pretty early. . .

EISNER: Are you a New Yorker?

ADAMS: Yeah, my father was in the army so we moved around a lot. Spent some time in Germany, all along the East Coast over here. But mostly I'm a New Yorker, from Manhattan.

EISNER: How old were you in '59?

ADAMS: I was 18.

EISNER: Did you have some art school?

ADAMS: I went to the School of Art and Design, which used to be called the School of Industrial Arts. They had a cartooning course there in which they discouraged anybody from taking cartooning as a course. Everywhere in the field in 1959, people discouraged hopeful kids from going into the comic business. 1959 was not a good year for entering the comics business. I went to DC and I got a lecture. They wouldn't let me in the door. They sent this guy Bill Perry out to talk to me, and Perry thought enough of my work to take it inside. He showed it to a bunch of editors, who really didn't care. I have the samples now and they're still pretty good.

EISNER: Were they realistic works?

ADAMS: Very realistic. . .

EISNER: . . .And the straight 'big foot' comics. . .?

ADAMS: I was into 'big foot' before I was into 'little foot.' All my career in high school was big foot. It wasn't until the end of high school that I got into little foot stuff. Early on, I was headed at several different times toward animation, gag cartooning, that kind of stuff.

During his last year in the School of Industrial Arts, Adams worked at an animation studio. Above is an animation cel with three of his figures. (1958).

I GOT INTO THE SMALL SPACE TAXI, AND AS THE BIG SHIP CIRCLED THE PLANET, I WENT DOWN TO EXPLORE!
I LANDED IN A CLEAR PATCH, AND LEFT THE SHIP ON FOOT! I LOOKED ON A WORLD THAT WAS MUCH LIKE OURS... ONE MILLION YEARS AGO!
I USED MY BACK JETS TO MOVE FROM PLACE TO PLACE, AND WATCHED THIS TEAMING, YOUNG AND SAVAGE WORLD!
TINY HORSES! MUCH THE SAME AS WE HAD ON EARTH BEFORE THE DAWN OF MAN. WHAT'S THAT??
I ROCKETED TO WHERE I'D HEARD THE STRANGE SOUND.....
LATER, THE SARGE STATIONED ME AT THE EDGE OF TOWN, WHILE HE WENT TO SEE WHAT HE COULD FIND!
WONDER WHAT'S KEEPING THE SARGE?
WORRIED, I MOVED OUT TO LOOK FOR SARGE, THEN...
BLAM
I STRAINED MY EYES AND EARS TO LEARN WHERE THE EIGHTY EIGHT WAS!
WHERE IS IT?
WHERE?
WHERE?
YOU KEEP ASKING A QUESTION AND YOU'RE BOUND TO GET AN ANSWER!
BRATATATA
BLAM
SARGE!

Two sample pages Adams tried to show at DC Comics when he was 18. Although Bill Perry liked these drawings, the editors "would not even let me in the door." (1959).

EISNER: Oh, so you were always comics oriented. . .

ADAMS: As a matter of fact, while I was in high school, I got a non-paying job at an animation studio. Two or three of us were able to work at an animation studio inking and doing some pencilling. It was wonderful! They didn't give us any money; we would have paid them if we'd had money. *(Both chuckle).* Anyway, part of me is big foot, I'm very strong on big foot stuff. Anytime I get a chance, even at DC, I. . .

EISNER: That's important, because I think it shows in an artist's work. . .

ADAMS: I don't think anybody can really be a decent, realistic illustrator unless they've done big foot stuff. . .

EISNER *(smiling):* I believe in that almost religiously. . .

ADAMS: . . .Right. *(warming up)* I look at other people's work, especially the realistic guys. That is, the guys who don't know how to draw, they don't know how to do big foot, never did big foot stuff. They use photographs, they use other people's work and they seem incredibly limited. They have no expansiveness in their work. They are a very constipated kind of artist. They do one kind of thing, and that's all they do. I don't understand that sort of thinking—or dealing with the world . . .artistically. I don't understand how people can have that kind of limited outlook. From the point of view of exercising ability, to draw big foot stuff makes you see all the shortcuts that are available in all kinds of different ways.

EISNER: Do you think of it as a technical thing, understanding shortcuts?

ADAMS: Shortcuts to all kinds of things. Telling stories, understanding people. It's a good way to approach a story, an idea, a concept. It's so much easier, for example, to do a quick cartoony storyboard of an idea than it is to sit there and grind it out. . .I mean if somebody says, "Give me a quick little storyboard of an idea," the natural tendency is to go to cartoons, because you can do it that much easier, and it becomes more clear.

EISNER: That's exactly what 'cartoon' means.

ADAMS: Really? It's a tool, and to the degree that you use the tool, you're able to create better stuff in whatever style you want to. If you can't use the tool—and I think of cartooning, big foot stuff, as a tool to be used as either a technique for a finished piece of art or a technique for another type of art, either way—if you don't have that tool, it's like not learning perspective. Everybody should have it; if they don't, they're less craft-conscious. I also believe it affects their thinking. If a person is not aware of the exaggerated life of the big foot world, their thinking tends to be smaller. When you combine the big foot and the little foot, and you understand both of them, you're able to do whatever it is you choose to do, *better!*. . .Of course, it's all a matter of opinion.

EISNER: Well, that's what counts in this type of discussion. I'm really not interested in what you eat for breakfast. . .

ADAMS: Right. Well, I wanted to finish this point because it does have a minor interest. When I went to DC, not only was I rejected, which I really didn't care that much about, but I learned that no one had gone into the field for five years.

EISNER: Explain that.

ADAMS: No one had gotten into drawing comic books for the five years previous to 1959. Nobody. You can actually go down a list of ages of people in the business and you will discover that, outside of people like Roy Thomas who got into the business late in his career as a writer, and Archie Goodwin, there is nobody who is my age, or five years junior or senior to me. Nobody. It's incredible. In the 10 years—five years before and after '59—maybe more, nobody got into the field.

EISNER: During that time, I was busy running a publishing company and had little to do with 'entertainment' comic books or the comic market. But you say it was a dead time. . .Develop that just a little bit. There were no new guys, new artists, coming into the field. . .

ADAMS: They were trying, but. . .

EISNER: You're saying the only people who were active were the Kirbys and

the Simons. . .and the ones who started in the '40s?

ADAMS: Right, and *they* were having a hard time finding work. The field. . .

EISNER: But, there were a lot of books being turned out then. . .

ADAMS: They were being turned out by people already in the field. Remember 1959 was after the 1953-54 Kefauver Committee hearings* when all those titles got cancelled, and EC Comics folded. You had all those EC guys running around and trying to find work. And I'm talking about 'greats' like Al Williamson and John Severin. *Those* guys were obviously top-notch guys, and were not able to find work, in a relative sense. They could find work, but you'd look at the comic books and you'd find in Dell a short story by Al Williamson. That's not a place for Al Williamson's work, but that's where he appeared, because there was no place else. I'm told John Severin went up to DC to see Robert Kanigher to do war stories. They didn't need him to do any war stories. He had to go up there three times, according to the story, to finally get work.

EISNER: You're saying it was really a whole period of wasteland!

ADAMS: It was an insane time. What happened to Wally Wood during those days? He stopped working for *Mad* magazine, then he sort of disappeared.

EISNER: . . .I lost touch with Wally in '58. . .

ADAMS: There was a scattering effect. People who could pick up work, picked up work, and others did commercial work. It was a terrible, terrible time, and it was reflected in the educational field. When I told people that I wanted to get into comics, they said "It's dead. There's nobody. . .forget about it." And I found it to be true. I tried to get into comics and they wouldn't let me in. I finally got some work at Archie Comics doing *Archie*—the only place that would have me. I took samples for four weeks. I took two new pages every week. Finally I traced two pages, I traced from [*Archie* artist] Dan DeCarlo, and I traced them exactly, and I brought them in as samples. They said, well, they weren't that good, but they'd use me.

EISNER: Incredible.That probably had an effect on what ultimately happened to you. Yet, out of that kind of climate grew Stan Lee!

ADAMS: Right. Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. I think we should give a little credit to Jack. *(laughs)*. . .

EISNER: Yes, I think we should give him a lot. The combination of the two was, I think, remarkable. The thing I've always given Stan is his ability to act as a kind of Svengali to the Trilbys of the field *(chuckles)*. He was able to stimulate and excite talented people. Regardless of whatever else he did or did not do. . . *THAT* was one of his major contributions.

ADAMS: Sounds good, I like that. . .

EISNER: You like that, huh? He's smiling, folks; his eyes are going up and down, but his head is going sideways! *(Both laugh)*.

ADAMS: No, ah, let me say something nice about Stan, because I don't often get a chance to say something nice about him. I think Stan made it all possible, and I think Stan worked along with everyone else to make it possible. I think that truly the genius that was the early Marvel Comics was Jack Kirby. I think Stan made it possible, just like if there wasn't a Jack Liebowitz, there wouldn't be DC Comics. For somebody to say, "Sure, we'll publish *Superman*." I think Stan is more than Jack Liebowitz in that Stan was able to make Jack Kirby's stuff be generated into a sort of a new form. I think it all existed in the work, it was all in Jack's stuff, and Stan simply did not stand in its way. He helped it along.

EISNER: Oh, I don't think anyone will quarrel with that.

ADAMS: I think that deserves a lot of credit, because other people didn't. . .

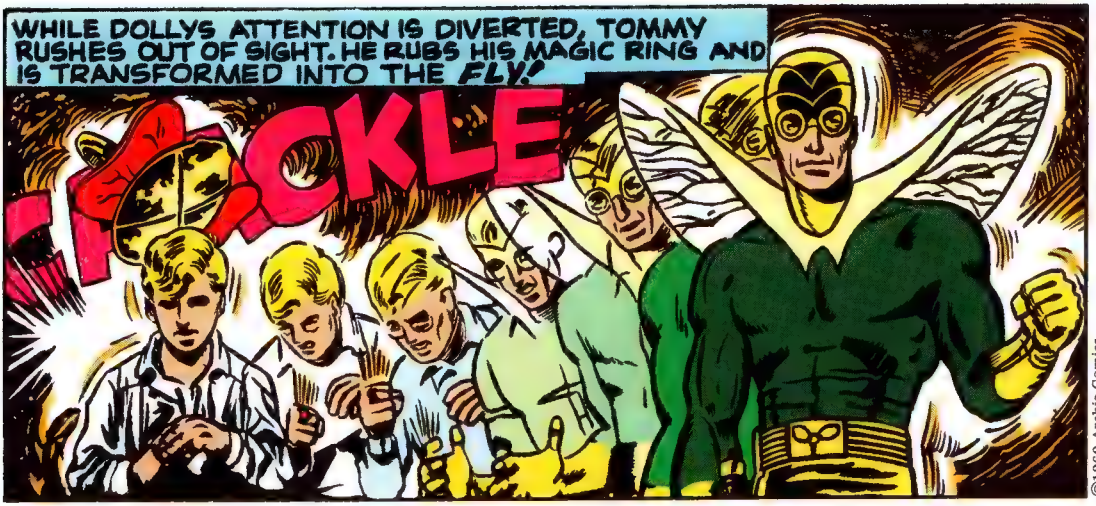
EISNER: That's right. A lot of shops

Still looking for work, Adams submitted a page with the above panel to Archie Comics. "It's a direct swipe from Dan DeCarlo. It's amazing what you'll do if ya gotta!" (1959).

Below is the last page Adams did for Archie Comics. It never got printed. (1959).

Reggie in THIRD PLACE
I DON'T KNOW WHY I ASKED JUDY TO GO TO THE PARTY WITH ME!
IN THE FIRST PLACE SHE'S BORING...
..IN THE SECOND PLACE, SHE'S SKINNY!
AND THE THIRD PLACE?
..AND IN THE THIRD PLACE SHE WOULDN'T GO WITH ME!
END
©1959 Archie Comics

*The Kefauver Committee Hearings dealt principally with crime and labor racketeering. But in 1954, comics came under investigation after the publication of SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT by Dr. Frederic Wertham, which linked comic book reading to juvenile crime. After the hearings, the Comics Code Authority came into existence and was strictly enforced. The furor created had a depressing effect on the comics industry, with EC Comics bearing the brunt of the attack. The company, except for MAD magazine, went out of business.


WHILE DOLLYS ATTENTION IS DIVERTED, TOMMY RUSHES OUT OF SIGHT. HE RUBS HIS MAGIC RING AND IS TRANSFORMED INTO THE FLY!
©1960 Archie Comics

Joe Simon didn't hire Adams because "he didn't want to contribute to the downfall of a. . .young illustrator." But Simon did use this Adams' panel for 'The Fly,' No. 4, page one of "Muggsy's Masterpiece's." (January, 1960).

were repressive. I mean there were fixed perimeters within which the artists did their work. There was very little experimentation. Certainly none was encouraged. . .from what I was told. That's what I meant when I said that Stan provided interaction. I think Stan had visions of his own. But to discuss Stan is a whole separate subject. I can think of about 8 or 9 guys who'd love to sit around and talk about Stan all day long. . .

ADAMS: Right.

EISNER: I think it's more important to evaluate what was done, why, and who were the people who did it. As far as gossip is concerned, it's not that important. This field seems to thrive on gossip *(laughs)*. . .It means very little! Often, it misleads young talents! Let's get back into this. . .You were doing tracings. . .

ADAMS: . . .I was doing tracings in order to get a job. Then I did pages on my own.

EISNER: What were they?

ADAMS: They were for the *Archie Jokebook.*

EISNER: And they were humorous. . . they were big foot stuff?

ADAMS: Yep.

EISNER: When did you start doing realistic stuff, which is the thing you're famous for.

ADAMS: Well, it was my initial goal when I left high school. I had tried to get work on *The Fly* comic book that Joe Simon was doing at Archie Comics. Joe Simon advised me that my stuff was good and he might otherwise use me, but I was obviously wasting my time in the comic book field, and he didn't want to contribute to the downfall of a possibly successful young illustrator. So that, for my own good, he was not going to use me. . .

EISNER: Wow! *(laughs)*

ADAMS: I appreciated his good wishes, God knows, but I sure would have liked. . .

EISNER: *(Guffaw).*

ADAMS: So anyway. . .actually, they used a panel from a sample page that I did. It's become a collector's item. One panel they lifted from one of my pages, and they stuck it in a *Fly* book. There's these explorer fans who go out and find that comic book and have me sign it, whenever I go to conventions.

EISNER: So that's how you started. . .

ADAMS: Well, actually, all I could do was go to the things that were as close to comic books as possible, without ever really getting into comics. I started to work with Howie Nostrand, an ex-comic artist who had become an illustrator. Someone had lured him back into the comic strip field with a "Bat Masterson" comic strip. I became his assistant. I pencilled backgrounds, took photos, and after a while, I got to do a lot of work on the strip. He had asked me if I wanted to take $50 a week, or a percentage. I asked for a percentage, so I got $9 a week for three months. . .

EISNER: Sounds like young Will Eisner.

ADAMS: Howie got *$11* a week for *six months,* so I felt I was doing fine. Then the strip ended. So I took my samples, through the help of a guy named Elmer Wexler. . . remember him? A dropout from comics?

EISNER: Yeah, sure. I knew Elmer. Strong illustrator, too.

BAT MASTERSON **by HERRON and NOSTRAND**

MITCHELL'S NO GUNSLINGER, POWERS! HE'S NOT FIGHTING YOU.
YOU'RE DEALT OUT OF THIS, MASTERSON! SHUT UP!
HERRON and NOSTRAND
© 1959 BY COLUMBIA FEATURES INC
OKAY, WES HAS GOT IT STARTED! GET SET! HE'LL PULL MASTERSON IN ON IT NOW!
IT'LL BE A PLEASURE GETTING MASTERSON-EVEN IN THE BACK!
HARDWARE
ALL RIGHT, MASTERSON--MAYBE YOU'LL STAND IN FOR MITCHELL! IT'S ABOUT TIME SOMEONE CHECKED YOUR REPUTATION!
©1959 Columbia Features Inc.

The sample that got Adams work at Johnstone and Cushing. "I wasn't as good as the sample indicates. This was a superhuman effort, with lots of stealing, scrap and work." (1960).

ADAMS: Yes, illustration style. He's a good example of the non-big foot illustrator. Relatively stiff, but a good dependable artist. . .I got to Johnstone and Cushing, and they were doing commercial comics. They were the best commercial comics company. At that time, they were doing the comics pages for *Boys Life* magazine, certain ads. . .

EISNER: Sure, they did "Mr. Coffee Nerves" for Maxwell House. . .

ADAMS: Yes, and "Chip Martin, College Reporter," for the Telephone Co.

EISNER: Matter of fact, Lou Fine was working up there at that time.

ADAMS: The first time I met Lou was up there. At that time, his career was not good.

EISNER: No? We'll discuss that later, but after 1950 I heard he had gone into that field. . .advertising illustration.

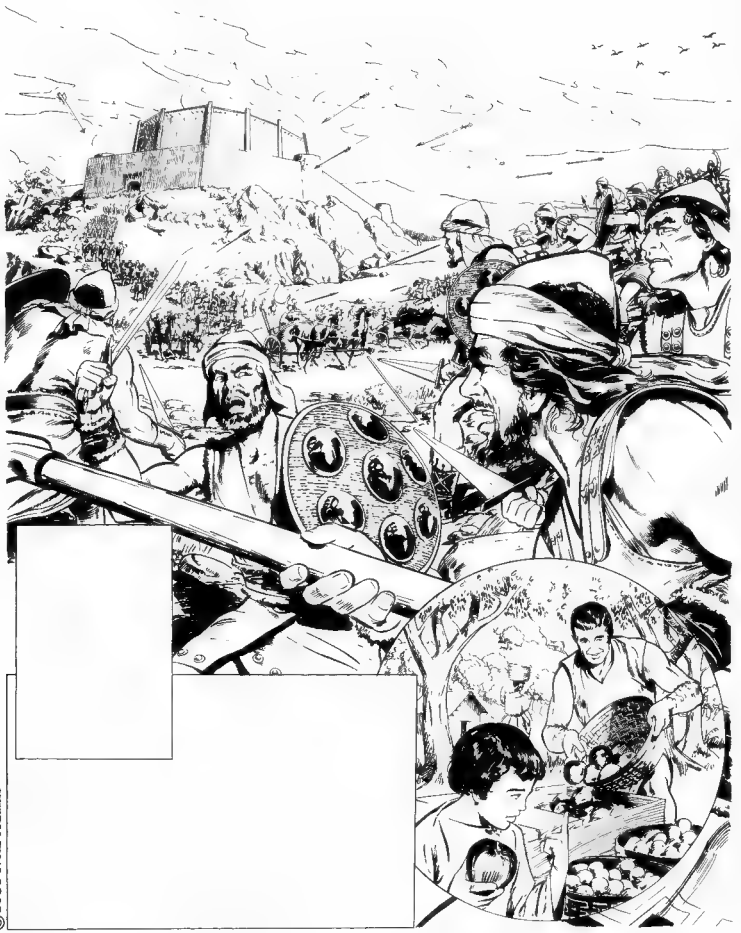
ADAMS: Exactly. Anyway, I did a lot of work for that company, and through the first year I was there, I ended up getting the top assignments. I worked my way toward that. It was great. It wasn't so great for the people who were working there; guys like Joe King and Wexler. But I was very ambitious, very anxious to show that I could do it. I had been driven away from comics, and I vowed that I would do good comics one way or another. So I was doing good commercial comics. By the time I was 19, I was doing the best stuff in the house. *(Short laugh)* When I was 20, they had a birthday party for me, the older guys did this. I said "This is great. I can't understand why you guys are making such a fuss about me being 20." They said, "well, we don't have to tell our wives and our friends that we're being beaten out by a teenager anymore."

A self-promotion piece Adams did utilizing Elmer Wexler's line technique. (1960).

EISNER: *(Hearty laugh)* Well, I guess you're part of the group who tried to leave comics and move "uptown." And, I suppose that was kind of an answer to the "dry" period you referred to. Well, at that time, I was across the street, also moving into the industrial usage of comics. I suppose in a sense I was doing the same thing . . .seeking other, more exciting areas. . . but doing it on a different level. I was publishing and so forth. I remember that for that period, ad agencies were paying enormously high rates, and they were the places the best illustrators went.

ADAMS: They spoiled me because they also introduced me to the business of comics. When I finally got back into the comic book field, I was appalled at what was going on. The standards were so different, and so were the attitudes. The return of

"The Conquerors of Canaan," a sample Adams did for Johnstone-Cushing to show "why I should be doing Bible story pages in 'Boys Life.' They gave me the assignment, but I had shot my wad. My first real page was so bad, they gave the assignment back to Irv Novick." (1959 or '60).



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original artwork. . .everything about it was different. The comic book industry was just . . .*primeval.*

EISNER: Well, Johnstone and Cushing served the advertising world, and that was a field that operated totally differently from comic book publishing. Artists were individuals to be sought, to be paid well, to be dealt with, to be reckoned with. . .

ADAMS: . . .as human beings. It's true.

EISNER: . . .while across the street in comic books, they were guys pulling oars in the galleys. Comic book shops were operated like galley ships *(laughter).* I should know!!

ADAMS: Right. The thing is, I got into Johnstone and Cushing when it was a ship going down. Cushing had had a stroke and was no longer there. Tim Johnstone was getting too old, and he turned the business over to his son. His son brought in an old army buddy who was a box salesman before coming there. He felt that the important thing was the amount of things, the units. If you could sell more units, it was better. We tried to convince him that there were other companies around selling units. If you sold quality, and then got into units after you sold quality, you were going to do a lot better. Because that's what Johnstone and Cushing meant. He didn't really believe that. He spent his time erasing the backs of jobs, so if the clients turned them over, they didn't see dirt on the back. Things just sort of nosedived. They sold what was left of the company to Al Stenzel. . .

EISNER: Well, space in the newspapers was getting more scarce. Advertisers were beginning to find other outlets. Television was coming on, and running a comic strip on the back of a full-color comic section was no longer a novelty. They felt it didn't have the pulling power anymore. A lot of factors contributed.

ADAMS: It's possible. I don't think there was anyone promoting. . .

EISNER: Well, so far as promotion is concerned, there's only so much you can do. Selling in this field has two levels. One is to convince the guy that you're right, and the other is to go along and give him what he thinks is right. I'm not saying that the Johnstone-Cushing type of shop died simply because of the field itself. The use of comics for industry is still valid today! Very often a company dies because the principals haven't got the imagination or capacity to move along with the trend.

ADAMS: I think that was more the case in this instance, because definitely the personalities of the people in charge were totally different from the personalities that had been there before. I have found through my company, through Continuity, that it's possible to revitalize the concept of using comics for promoting and advertising. But you have to get the message out there. We run ads in *The Black Book*, a trade journal, and other places, and we let people know that using comics to sell is a good idea. We get clients, and we do okay. We got to build a studio with the money they pay us. The business is out there, it's just that Johnstone-Cushing didn't know how to get it. They were living off the tail of what had been. People who remembered would come back, and then it petered out. No one really looked for work. And that's part of the business. The world is very strong on promotion and selling and letting people know, and building excitement within people.

EISNER: I have to tell you how my father used to refer to my publishing business. "What you have there," he would say, "is a wheelbarrow. Sure, it's a machine, but if you don't push it, it won't go."

ADAMS: Of course! And that's really true with any business. It's possible for some fantastic thing to get started and to move on its own. For example, you can point to *Superman* as something like that. Once it started, the idea of superheroes, it created an industry.

EISNER: Well, what you have is a case of continuing serendipity. That goes for artists as well as publishers. Let's talk about the artists. An artist comes into the field and says "Ha, my market is comic books. They're looking for superheroes, and that's what I'm going to draw, because I want to enter the market." He gets a job doing superheroes, and he does it well. He's intelligent. Gradually, the market begins to evaporate right under his feet; it's dying. It's dying right now, under the feet of a lot of guys in town, and they aren't aware of it. They're doing superheroes, fantasy creatures, space stuff. But right under their feet, it's changing. We don't know where it's going. But what happens is that when an artist discovers the field and becomes very good at it. . .he

©1988 AT&T
Chip Martin
COLLEGE REPORTER
meets
"THE NIGHT PEOPLE"
RRRRRRRRRRR
AFTER MIDNIGHT, CHIP, THE CITY BELONGS TO A HANDFUL OF IMPORTANT PEOPLE. DOCTORS, POLICEMEN, FIREMEN. PEOPLE WHO PROTECT OUR SAFETY AND OUR PROPERTY.
"BUT THERE'S ANOTHER GROUP—BELL SYSTEM PEOPLE WHO SUPPLY THE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES THAT GIVE THE CITY ITS VOICE. FOR EXAMPLE, OUR EMERGENCY REPORTING PUTS CALLERS IN INSTANT TOUCH WITH A DISPATCHER AT PUBLIC SERVICE HEADQUARTERS."
DISPATCHING
ON THE OTHER HAND, MOST OF THE CALLS MISS WILLIAMS HANDLES ARE EMERGENCIES. AT 3 A.M. SHE HAS TO BE WIDE-AWAKE.
THESE ARE THE PEOPLE I WANT TO MEET. THE STORY OF THEIR JOBS WILL MAKE INTERESTING READING.
LET'S START HERE, CHIP, WITH SOMETHING ROUTINE. CABLE SPLICING SOMETIMES GOES ON ALL NIGHT TO MEET THE NEED FOR MORE AND MORE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES.
MIKE FOSTER USES THE SLOW HOURS TO CHECK EQUIPMENT. HE MAKES SURE THAT COMMUNICATIONS ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLE—ANYTIME.
IT MUST BE AN ODD LIFE. GO TO WORK WHEN EVERYBODY ELSE IS COMING HOME. SLEEP DURING THE DAY.
MOST OF US WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY. NO RUSH-HOUR TRAFFIC. BUT MORE IMPORTANT, WE KNOW THAT WHAT WE DO IS ESSENTIAL WORK.
AND WE GET THE SATISFACTION OF SUPPLYING THE COMMUNICATIONS THAT HELP OTHER PEOPLE SLEEP A LITTLE SOUNDER.
AT&T
Bell System
American Telephone & Telegraph and Associated Companies

An ad done for Bell Telephone through Johnstone-Cushing. Adams also did ad work for Esso Oil, Time Magazine, Norelco, the National Guard, Avon, and many others.

resists moving on! For two reasons. One, he's scared, because he's got something good going, so why the hell change it? Second, he's not really able to see that far ahead, or at least, not able to sense it. After all, he really doesn't have the time. He is not looking up over his drawing board. This has been my concern. That happens often with publishers. Publishers are constantly responding to what they think is the need of the market. They're operating like our military runs a war, with yesterday's tactics. So they're operating under a theory, a formula. Every publisher I ever knew, and that includes myself, always said, "Tell me what the formula is. . ."

ADAMS: . . ."and I'll do it."

EISNER: Right! Which, by the way, accounts for the success of the early comic book publishing houses. Their thrust was, "you do it, and if you do it well, I'm gonna do it too, and we'll both make money." That's the formula for most modern comic book houses.

ADAMS: Well, actually, that's sort of a good point relative to the first question you asked: "Where am I in the field?" Part of the initial rejection I found in the field and the fact nobody else was getting into it, turned me into some kind of maverick, in spite of myself. If you're faced with an impossible problem, you either decide to solve it or let it go and do something else. I had decided that I was going to get to it. Whatever "it" was, I was going to find my way around it. I went out and got myself an education. I'm not talking about a school education, but an education in all other aspects of the field. When I came back, I was known all over the world for my syndicated strip, "Ben Casey," which I did for 3½ years. But when I came into the comics field, it was like I dropped out of space. Somehow, everybody was backing away, saying "who is this guy?" Well, nothing comes from nowhere, obviously. What happened was, I had been driven out, I had gone into illustration, animation, syndicated strip, commercial strips, all kinds of ad art; I had learned all these things. When they finally let me back in, I came in with this big rush of stuff, which I thought was just standard stuff. It turned out to be revolutionary.

EISNER: You were bringing something to the field. . .

ADAMS: That's right. My stuff was so contrary to what was going on, I learned lessons from that contrariness. The lesson seemed to be: You can decide what is going to happen. You don't have to do what a publisher wants, you don't have to do what sells. You can do anything you want, as long as you do it *so well* that they can't say no. . .They'll let you do it, even if they think it won't sell, just because they're interested. . .

EISNER: When you say "they" you're talking about editors and . . .

ADAMS: . . .the publishers. You can say editors, but really it comes down to the publisher, because an editor's got to convince his publisher. . .But you can actually excite people into doing things that are contrary to their nature. That's hard for me to believe even as I say it, but I know we did it. We did it when we did the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* series. We got into relevant comics. . .

EISNER: What are "relevant comics?"

ADAMS: Well, in the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* series, which has just been reprinted, we did comic books that had to do with the problems of the day.

EISNER: I, uh, never read any of these things, so. . .

ADAMS: Too bad! First six pages of this are pretty good [shows comic book]. This guy's Green Lantern, and this one's Green Arrow. Had nothing to do with each other, just coincidentally they happen to be called Green Lantern and Green Arrow. This guy's got a magical ring, and this one shoots arrows.

EISNER: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: The title originally was *Green Lantern* and we brought Green Arrow into it, and the conflict can best be expressed very quickly by that page. . .

EISNER: Your text says, *I've been reading about the blue skins and about how on a planet somewhere. . .and you've done considerable for the purple skins. . .only there are skins you never bother with. . . black skins. . .I want to know how come?* And he says, *I can't.* Hmm, very good. . . you're doing the racial thing. . .

ADAMS: Now this is a superhero who knows that he's fighting for right all the time, and suddenly he's stopped [claps hands], in six pages of a comic book. And told, "What you're doing is bullshit. You don't help anybody, you just go around acting like a hero."

EISNER: "No Evil Shall Escape My Sight" is the title of the story. . .

THE HELICOPTER LANDS NEAR THE RICE FIELD...GUERRILLA GUNFIRE...GRENADES... WE'RE TRAPPED! THE VEE CEES CLOSE IN FOR THE KILL!
8/22
© 1964 by NEA, Inc T M Reg U.S. Pat Off
"LT. DAN SANDERS, AND SOMEONE ELSE ARE IN THE HELICOPTER. I CAN'T MAKE HIM OUT. THE VIET NAMESE STUDENT PILOT IS FINISHED."
BEEOW!
V-I-P
SPANG
©1964 NEA, Inc.

Two 'Ben Casey' strips. Adams, 21 when he started, did the strip for 3½ years. He gained fame in the newspaper-syndicate field, but when he entered comic books, "it was like I dropped out of space." (1964).

"I WAS THE MAN IN THE HELICOPTER WITH DAN SANDERS. I SEE IT NOW. DAN WAS SHOT."
BLAM
"HE WAS HIT AGAIN! HE ORDERED ME TO MAKE A BREAK FOR IT AND LEAVE HIM!"
SPANG
V-I-P
8/24
© 1964 by NEA, Inc T M Reg U S Pat Off

I BEEN READIN' ABOUT YOU... HOW YOU WORK FOR THE BLUE SKINS...AND HOW ON A PLANET SOMEPLACE YOU HELPED OUT THE ORANGE SKINS...
...AND YOU DONE CONSIDERABLE FOR THE PURPLE SKINS! ONLY THERE'S SKINS YOU NEVER BOTHERED WITH--!
..THE BLACK SKINS! I WANT TO KNOW... HOW COME?!
ANSWER ME THAT, MR. GREEN LANTERN!
I... CAN'T...
©1970 DC Comics

A turning point for the Green Lantern. Adams and Denny O'Neil start DC's "relevant comics" in the April, 1970, issue.

ADAMS: It's a reprint of an issue done 10 years ago. But here was the Green Lantern flying around, trying to fight injustice. Here's a guy pushing a man around, knocks him down on the street. Green Lantern grabs him and sends him to jail. Okay? He's dusting the guy [victim] off, and somebody yells "Hey, superhero." And Green Lantern turns and says "There's no reason to thank me," and gets hit in the head with a can. Then all this garbage starts to rain down on him, and he starts to threaten the people. The people are angry at him. . .

EISNER: I see. A superhero getting hit by a bean can. . . I'm with you on that! Let me just ask you quickly, place this *Green Lantern* in the so-called "Stan Lee —(you should pardon the expression)— revolution," where he started bringing in relevant heroes. . .

ADAMS: *Flawed* heroes, heroes who had personal problems. . .

EISNER: Yes, where did this fall, before or later?

ADAMS: This fell quite a bit later. What happened was that Stan Lee was doing these flawed superheroes. Over at DC. . .

EISNER: Did they influence you?

ADAMS: Not really. DC Comics at that time did not really know how to do comic books. They were doing the old style superhero—really boring. There were those of us, Denny O'Neil, the writer and I. . .

EISNER: Denny wrote this?

ADAMS: Right! The point is, it turns out that this guy who got pushed to the ground is a tenement landlord, and he is going to knock this group of houses down in order to make room for a parking lot. This woman is the grandmother of the kid Green Lantern sent to jail, and now this woman has no support. The kid was pushing the landlord around because the guy was going to knock down the building. . .

EISNER: Terrific, so you have a 'reality'. . .a serious consequence. . .

ADAMS: . . .We have *CONFLICT* here. This hero [Green Arrow] is saying, "you just can't do this. You just can't assume you know what's going on."

EISNER: Yes. One of the major things —in fact one of the flaws, in my opinion— of dealing with the superhero character, is that the plot rarely deals with the consequences of their actions. And what you've done here, is to deal with the consequence.

ADAMS: There are all kinds of ways to view it. For example we had, in one of the stories, a very simple sequence where Green Arrow has a run in. . .

EISNER: Before you get too far into it, how about the philosophy of this? Also, I'd like you to get into how you built the story, how you structured it from Denny's script.

ADAMS: Right. . .Well, perhaps this example will speak to that point. This thug in an alley fires a crossbow at Green Arrow. The arrow is about 12 inches long, goes into Green Arrow's shoulder. Now, it's a very dramatic scene, the big close up of the thing going into his shoulder, but obviously it doesn't hit him in the chest. It's a small action, compared to knocking down buildings, which is what superheroes usually do. What we do then is show the results of it going into his shoulder, because obviously, it's a painful, painful wound. He tries to get help from people, and people pass him by. He tries to get help from a cop; the cop thinks he's a drunk, and tells him to move along. He goes to a phone booth to try and make a call, and the phone's out of order. He staggers finally to a hospital, and he's standing in front of a nurse with an arrow protruding from his shoulder, trying to get some attention. The nurse tells him he has to fill out these papers. In the last picture, he just falls across her desk. The strength of that sequence is, here's a very small action in a superhero comic book, but it's played in such a way that you get involved. It becomes more important. When superheroes knock down buildings in deserted parts of the city, there's not much emotion in that. It really has to do with the way you tell a story. What Denny and I did, we took typical superhero situations, and we tried to place them more in the real world. In the real world, there's a lot different reaction to those things than there is in the comic book world.

EISNER: Exactly.

ADAMS: You can't walk down the street with a funny costume on without people looking at you, pointing at you and wondering who the hell you are.

EISNER: How did you deal with it here?

ADAMS: In different ways. People were reacting to them. As soon as they would come in they would say, "this guy is a superhero, he's known and we have to deal with him. But I don't have to deal with him on the level he wants to be dealt with. He's not a superhero if he's going to punch me. If he punches me, I'll sue him." A very different world.

EISNER: (*Laughs*). There's kind of a problem there. In the earlier days of doing *The Spirit*, it didn't bother me, but after about two years into the series, I found it harder and harder to deal with a hero walking down the street, wearing a mask. . .Like standing in a subway (*groan*).

ADAMS: Right, what do we do?

EISNER: Hard to deal with this thing! Particularly when you want to portray real life. This is where I think you were going. You were faced with a big consideration.

ADAMS: The book was on the verge of being cancelled. It was presented to Denny and myself, and since it was on the verge, we thought "they're not going to care that much about the way we go. They probably won't even notice. . ."

EISNER: You're now reciting the history of great recoveries. It happened that way with others. *Mad*, for instance. . .

ADAMS: (*Chuckling*) So, we just sort of quietly went about, with Julie Schwartz, the editor, working out the direction of the book. Doing comic books can be very boring if you're not into what you're doing. And an awful lot of stuff at DC was boring. We also could say, in case anybody questioned us, that we were trying to do something competitive with Marvel. So

they left us alone. But it was like having a snake in your bed—finally, they were asking, "what's going on over there?" After a couple issues, the people at DC started to read these things. Amazing. The editors didn't used to read each other's comic books. We started to get letters. As we went on, we found it was possible to tackle major problems. We tackled the Chicago Seven trial, Spiro Agnew. . .We sure got after Agnew. We got a letter from the governor of Florida saying Florida was not going to distribute DC Comics if they were going to do this to the noble vice president of the United States. We implied that Agnew was misusing power. Course, it wasn't true. . .*(laughs)*. . .we got into women's lib.

EISNER: So you were really dealing with social issues for the first time.

ADAMS: We dealt with them as directly and honestly as we could. We finally had one more to go. . .there aren't that many really big problems you can deal with. Certain things are so subtle you can't deal with them. But certain things were obvious.

EISNER: How did you and Denny, on a writing level, solve a given problem?

ADAMS: We didn't solve the problem.

EISNER: Oh, I see. Your hero simply. . .

ADAMS: Part of the charm of it was it really opened things for debate. Green Lantern was saying "You have to defend the law." And Green Arrow was saying "So what if the law is wrong?" Just that; that was the basic difference between them. You have a discussion that can last for months. So what do you do? If you want to take action, you've got to decide what action to take. If you're someone with a certain amount of power, your action is going to make a difference. You can make a big change. Your big change might be unlawful. I mean, it's a big problem. We tried our best to deal with it.

EISNER: The reason I asked, Neal, is that as long as I can remember, a superhero was supposed to solve a problem in that particular issue. If a guy was going to capture or destroy the Earth with his X-ray gun, the superhero would destroy the gun and villain and save the world. You weren't doing that. . .

ADAMS: That's right. We had to come up with solutions, and I would say we backpedaled a bit for the sake of the form. We would end up having our villain being so bad, he'd pull out a hand grenade and try to blow up somebody. Then we'd stop him—he'd get arrested for some other reason.

EISNER: In this book, there's an epilogue that couldn't be closer to what was going on. You've got a man with a background of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy, and Green Arrow is saying: *Something is wrong, something is killing us all, something hideous. . .Some hideous moral cancer is rotting our very souls.* That's a social statement OF THE TIME. It was a very, very strong statement.

ADAMS: What happened is this little Guardian. . . the Guardians are the one's who are in control of the Green Lantern's power ring. They're in space; they're sort of a universal police force. Since there is a problem here that coalesces in this debate, they decide to send a Guardian to Earth to travel America with the superheroes. The heroes were to be in their civilian identities. They were going to try and find what America is all about. . .

EISNER: So, what started as a wake turned into a christening.

ADAMS: Well, we went on for about 11 issues, and it was decided then that the thing wasn't selling that well. Carmine Infantino, the publisher at the time, decided to cancel the book. A couple years later, they revived it, and it's doing well.

EISNER: Incredible, incredible. . .

ADAMS: We sort of ran out of things. We were near the end, and Denny and I were interested in the drug problem. We were asked about doing a general drug book for the institutions against narcotics. Unfortunately, the proposals we made were not looked upon favorably. We implied that maybe the drug problem is a social problem, and not the problem of the person who takes the drugs. We said that the solutions are within the society, and the society has to solve these problems, because it's the society that puts people in the position to need drugs. We weren't saying that drugs were good. We were asking what happens if a kid comes home and his father's got his feet up, smoking a cigar, and he's got a scotch next to him and he's watching television. The kid wants to talk to him, but the mother says "leave your father alone, he's had a busy day." The kid has to walk away saying "I had a busy day, too, and I didn't get paid for it and I can't drink or smoke, and I have to do homework now." In that situation, a kid could go many different ways. Some kids get involved with drugs. The question then is, is the kid involved in drugs because he's a punk, he doesn't know his ass from his elbow, or is he involved because we as a society have not correctly taught our children to find an outlet? Drugs really don't make you happy. Some of them get you high, but basically, the idea is to get numb. For a lot of people, feeling nothing is better than feeling unhappy 90% of the time.

EISNER: Neal, let's not digress in this direction. . .

ADAMS: All right. Well, Denny and myself were feeling dissatisfied. . .

EISNER: This gives me an opportunity to ask how you and Denny worked. What was common practice with you? Did Denny write a script in motion picture detail? Or did you get a rough?

ADAMS: Motion picture detail.

EISNER: Do you like to work that way?

ADAMS: I neither like or don't like to work that way. That was DC's way. At Marvel, we sat down and had a conference, and I'd go and do the story. At DC, the writer was expected to produce a script. We'd sort of decide what subject to do, and talk things over briefly, and then Denny would write the script. Sometimes, I'd become more involved. . .

EISNER: Sounds like you had a rather close philosophical relationship.

ADAMS: I think Denny would say not. Denny and I were two people alive in the world in those days who were thinking. We came from different backgrounds and had different attitudes about almost everything. . .

EISNER: And physically you were apart. You didn't work together. . .

ADAMS: . . .No, not at all. But there were things that were obvious to both of us. Injustice tends to be obvious.

EISNER: How do you feel about the relationship between an artist and writer? Who dominates the scene? How close should they be? How do you feel about that from a work level?

ADAMS: Before I did my syndicated strip, I spoke to a lot of artists and some writers who did syndicated strips. In general, they hated each other. I thought, it may be that these guys have their reasons, but if I'm going to do a strip, I have to decide ahead of time that I'm not going to hate the guy. I have to decide that he's worthwhile working with. If he is, then I'm not going to give him a hard time. I'm going to let him do his job. I've been happy with that attitude in general. If I write, I expect other people to be happy with it. They aren't necessarily, because they haven't gone through the same thought processes. But I find, if I'm going to deal with a writer, first, I find if he's any good.

EISNER: What do you mean, "happy with"? You said you're working *with* a writer. . .do you expect that he must approve of what you do with the script? Do you take whatever you get and, say, run with it?

ADAMS: It doesn't happen like that for me. It generally happens that I get to work with writers I want to work with. . .

EISNER: All right, you go to a publishing house and they say, "Look, I've got Sam Brown, Joe Jones and Abe Smith." You say, "I'd rather work with Smith." They say "Fine." Is that about how it goes with you?

ADAMS: The way it went, anyway.

EISNER: Right, we'll get into that later. You start working. . .Now what?

ADAMS: I assume he's my counterpart; he is the writer side, and I'm the artist side. I try to tell the story he's written as well as I can. I try to tell *his* story, because I know in the back of my mind that if I have a story, I'll be able to tell it some other time. I don't like to be in the position where I don't like what he's done, because what happens is, you get pulled in two different directions. First, you want to do a good story. Second, you don't agree that a specific story is good. In order to make it good in your eyes, you have to ignore a certain part of the story. That dilutes the story. I'd rather go to him and say "Look, I have a problem. Can you help me? I'd like to do this instead of that." If I can't, I'll do the story the way it's written. I'll do it, because, it seems to me, by mucking with his story, I am diluting my own work. For that period of time, I say "this is a good story." If I don't like it, I don't work with him again. The strength of a story can get lost trying to fix something I don't think is right. . .

EISNER: Then what do you feel. . . your input, then. . . is. . .

ADAMS: . . .is as an artist. . .

EISNER: . . .is in visualizing what he wants. . .

ADAMS: Exactly! And I try to find in what he does, the thing that's better. . .

EISNER: Let's assume he gives you a set of dialogue in which a guy is running down the street and he jumps on a parapet. And the man says, as sometimes happens in much of the comic book stuff I

see, *I am jumping on a parapet.* And then he hits the villain and says *I am punching you in the nose.* You look at this and you feel, "well, I can show this visually. I don't need the dialogue." Okay? What now?

ADAMS: I don't think I'd run into that situation. It's never happened. With Marvel Comics, usually their dialogue is put in later, because the artist draws the story and the Marvel writers put the dialogue in. It's usually the stupid writers that can't figure out a piece of dialogue, and they throw in whatever comes to mind. I don't like people working over my stuff that way. I had two people working on my stuff at Marvel. There was Roy Thomas, who did a terrific job, and I had Gerry Conway, who did an abominable job. I mean every time I looked at the stuff, I just could not believe that he would put those words in the people's mouths. I just couldn't work with it anymore. I don't like to work with people I don't respect. I'd like to have the respect first. I worked at DC Comics with Murray Boltinoff as an editor and Bob Haney as a writer. Bob Haney is not a bad writer, but he had been trained to do the old-style DC comic book. He would write scripts for Batman teamups in *Brave and Bold.* At that time, Batman was treated like a cartoon; they were still doing stories similar to that of the Batman TV show. So I started by asking the editor if, instead of having a sequence take place in the daytime, having it take place at night. I said Batman is supposed to be a creature of the night. To have a guy in that outfit walking around during the day, to me, seemed silly. He'd okay that. After awhile I got to the point where I didn't feel close to Bob Haney's stuff, and I asked the editor if I could make changes. Then we got to an understanding where Bob Haney would do a basic story and I would play with it.We turned out a lot of good stories. The editor of *Batman* got letters about this great Batman character that was in *Brave and Bold.* And that was only a secondary Batman feature. That editor came to us and asked for stories. My relationship with Bob Haney was, I would have to say, tense, because I was changing his stuff. But in general, the changes were mainly in a new direction, and since Bob was doing the old direction stuff, it was just a matter of direction. As a matter of fact, he got a lot of attention as a writer. He has since changed direction. In that instance, we got to do a lot of things in spite of the friction that existed. But I wasn't comfortable. I like Denny O'Neil's writing, and Roy Thomas's; I like very few other people in the field. . .Denny began writing minimal descriptions for me, because he felt I would be able to read his mind enough to understand what he was driving at, and he then would let me go. As we worked together, he would let me loose more. But then he would give me harder things to do. He was able to loosen himself. up. A lot of times, a writer will constrict himself because he's not sure the artist will be able to do what he wants. So you have all kinds of factors in there, and it's very hard to know at a given time what factor will influence what decision. So I try to stick to a standard. I like to work with writers that I enjoy working with, so that I don't run into all these problems.

EISNER: When was the last time you wrote and drew your own?

ADAMS: *Ms. Mystic.*

EISNER: That's the current one.

ADAMS: Yeah, you might find this interesting as a direction.

EISNER: We're looking at a four page feature for *Ms. Mystic* about the killing of a bald eagle. That in itself seems a minor thing, but as the story develops, it touches on a very basic human issue. And that, to me, is a function of the growth of comics. It's where comics are going—not the four color process, Baxter paper or coated stock. That's unimportant; it's what's going on inside that counts. Here's a case of the reader being privy to how Neal Adams feels about something. I'm reading Neal Adams here for the first time. . .

ADAMS: You know, I don't know if I think that way. All I know is, there are people who think that way about it, and here is something that's true. I'm not saying I necessarily believe this. What I'm saying is this is true. . .

EISNER: Now wait a minute, are you using this to expose an idea that you don't necessarily agree with?

ADAMS: I don't feel obligated to agree with it. I don't have a lot of opinion on it.

EISNER: Well, am I reading Neal Adams' opinion here, or am I reading something Neal Adams doesn't subscribe to?

ADAMS: You're reading an opinion. I don't think it's mine.

EISNER: You mean it's somebody's opinion that Neal Adams is exposing. . . Then we've got to strike out all the stuff about philosophy I said before *(laughs).*

ADAMS: But you see, there are opinions that aren't expressed in comic books. I would fight to stop somebody from shooting an eagle, because I know they are becoming extinct. Whether or not. . . you must understand that Ms. Mystic is a specific character, and she has a greater desire than I do to do a thing.

EISNER: Oh, for a moment, I thought we'd have a brouhaha. Fair enough. So, in this story you demonstrate Ms. Mystic's reaction to a specific thing, which may not be Neal Adams' reaction. . .

ADAMS: . . .Or may. . .

EISNER: . . .Or may?? But, am I to believe, as it says here, that Neal Adams doesn't necessarily agree with the fact that "Criminals are at worst a temporary inconvenience," and that the "real criminals are those who steal our future"? Does Neal Adams not necessarily believe this?

ADAMS: It's not a matter of belief. It seems to me that it's self-evident. It's like .... .If I said the sky is blue, and you say the sky is blue, as an artist, I may go out and say, "look, when I do a sky, I'd rather do a magenta sky, so I'll find a magenta sky." But if somebody said to you, "the sky isn't blue, it's red," you'd say, "well, no, the sky is blue." A bank robbery is a temporary inconvenience. . .

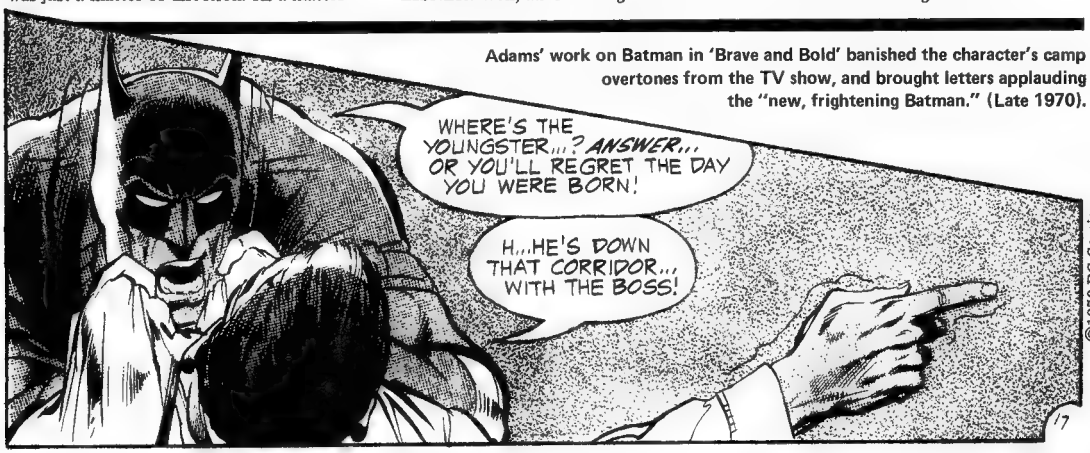
EISNER: No, you're mixing apples and oranges here, Neal, because you're talking about a phenomenon as against a philosophical point. This is a philosophical. . .

ADAMS: You see, I don't think of it as a philosophical point. This is a fact. A philosophical point might be if parents don't take a strict attitude with their children, they're all going to grow up bad. That's a matter of opinion. . .

EISNER: Well, so is robbery being a temporary inconvenience, and the real criminals being those who would steal our future. I may not agree with that. . .

ADAMS: See, I don't think. . .

EISNER: I could agree that there's no



Adams' work on Batman in 'Brave and Bold' banished the character's camp overtones from the TV show, and brought letters applauding the "new, frightening Batman." (Late 1970).

question whether the sky is blue or not, but there is a philosophical argument over that position.

ADAMS: But you see, I would leave that up to other people to debate. Here is somebody, who, when you read what she says, you go [snaps fingers] "That's right. You know, that's true." Now, it may not necessarily be true. . .

EISNER: That's the function of a philosophical observation. . .

ADAMS: You understand what I'm saying is that there are certain observations made by scientists and other people in different fields that are not necessarily made available to us all the time, or at least on a regular enough basis for us to consider them. Certainly, they aren't made available to kids to consider them. Here is a point of view. I'm not in a position to say that this is true or not true. It's very obvious the things Ms. Mystic believes.

EISNER: I'm going to have to stop you here. If you didn't believe inside you that robbery is at worst a "temporary inconvenience against a small number of people, and the real criminals are those who steal our future," would you put that in the mouth of your *heroine?*

ADAMS: Sure.

EISNER: Oh, you would.

ADAMS: I could have another character say "no, that's not right."

EISNER: I'm talking about the heroine, not the villain.

ADAMS: Well, it doesn't matter. It doesn't have to be the villain, it could be another character. Remember we did *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*. Both of them were noble men, in their own way. But they believed totally opposite from each other. They based their whole lives on it, and they are both good men.

EISNER: So, this story is one which Neal Adams is telling about Ms. Mystic, whose position is being enunciated. It's not a statement by Neal Adams on his position.

ADAMS: Right. I don't think it's the artist's job to make decisions.

EISNER: You're an artist/writer here.

ADAMS: Yeah, well, I think a writer is an artist, too. I think of an artist as being some guy on the clouds. He's floating up there and looking down. As much as he's part of life down there, there's a certain part of him that pulls away and looks down. He sees something going on over there; he's not necessarily emotionally involved in it, but he sees that it's happening. If he takes out a flag and waves it and says "Hey, you guys may not be able to see it, but this seems to be going off in that direction. Maybe you'd like to take a look." Okay? It's his job to make observations. . .

EISNER: . .known as perspective. . .

ADAMS: Historically, that's what the artist's job is. To me, an awful lot of people in our field don't take that job seriously. They get involved in the nuts and bolts too much. Nuts and bolts have to be there, but there are times when you can really stand back and make an observation through a character, that people can either take seriously or not. In the case of Ms. Mystic, there seemed to be few superheroes who take this sort of thing seriously. Who care about the planet. They're interested in stopping bank robbers, and not interested in stopping people who could represent a greater danger to us. There are people who say, in regard to nuclear power and nuclear waste, you know, "let our children find their own planet to live on. Let's blow this one up, and let them find another one."

I... I'LL... TAKE HIM TO THE GAME WARDEN...
I... LOOK... I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED HERE, BUT YOU...YOU CLEARLY HAVE INCREDIBLE ABILITIES. WHY DON'T YOU PURSUE REAL CRIMINALS.. BANK ROBBERS THE MAFIA... WHY...
REAL CRIMINALS? YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS. A BANK ROBBERY IS AT WORST A TEMPORARY INCONVENIENCE TO A SMALL NUMBER OF PEOPLE. THE REAL CRIMINALS ARE THOSE WHO STEAL OUR FUTURE.
©1982 Neal Adams
Panels from a 'Ms. Mystic' story that sparked a debate between Eisner and Adams about the functions of an artist. (1982).

EISNER: Well, all right. I wanted to get that, because it hinges on the main thrust of my concern regarding people like you, who are what I like to call thinking artists. There's the drones and clones, and there are the people who create. Let's use this also as a point of entry into how you prepare, how you work.

ADAMS: Don't you find that stuff sort of. . .boring (*laughs*)?

EISNER: I find that it's the type of thing that anybody who's interested in the field, wants to know. The first thing I asked the older artists when I began was. . .

EISNER/ADAMS: (Unison) "What pen do you use?" (*Laughter*)

EISNER: I'm not really talking about that. I'm talking about steps and procedures, because it has to do with your thinking and philosophy.

ADAMS: I think one of the things we learn as artists is that stuff is unimportant.

EISNER: Well, it has to do with why anybody is interested in how an artist works. . .

ADAMS : All right. I don't mind talking about it. I would preface it by saying that it's unimportant how somebody works. For any student to spend overmuch time being concerned about who works what way, seems to me a misdirection. I think it'd be a lot smarter for people to find their way, and to investigate techniques in a more general way.

EISNER: I only disagree when you talk about total obsession with it, but I think it's a point of departure. Aren't you interested in how other artists work? Just minimally. . .

ADAMS: Well, yes and no, as a technical thing.

EISNER: I was fascinated when I was up in Harvey Kurtzman's studio and learned that he uses six or seven overlays before he arrives at a given scene. Fascinating to me! I didn't go back and change my style and technique, but I learned. . . There are things we influence people on, and it has to do with the philosophy of the approach to one's work. It's a key to your thinking, and the result: *your work!*

ADAMS: This is true. . .

EISNER: For example, we'll have a final shootout over something that's been going on for a long time. That is, using photographs. Two years ago, in my classroom, I said "absolutely don't waste your time with photographs." Student raises his hand and says, "I was up in Neal Adams' studio, and he says your full of crap. Use photographs."

ADAMS: Yeah.

EISNER: At which point, I was stumped. I've gotta fight with Neal Adams in my classroom (*Both laugh*). So I said, "Bring him up here and I'll shoot it out with him." How do you feel about that?

ADAMS: I read an article about Norman Rockwell. He talked about his art. He had originally used models. He would extrapolate from them, make their noses a little bit bigger; he'd have them go into cuter poses. He was having difficulty in getting the character he wanted because he'd have his people pose in odd positions for long periods of time. It sounded very difficult. So, he started taking photographs. Then he could put a person in a position that might be uncomfortable for a moment, instead of an hour. It helped his work because now he could get real people that he could paint with lighting, very subtle technique, in more natural poses. Other artists found out about it, and raised an uproar. "Why are you doing this? This is not what true art is about." His attitude was "I'm sorry they feel that way, but it helps me get my work done, so I do it."

EISNER: I don't quarrel with the use

of photographs *per se*. I quarrel with what they were used for. If I want a man standing on his head, or one hand, I'll take a photograph so I have a record. Or I'll use a photo for reference, how many buttons on a man's suit.

ADAMS: Rockwell would take photos, and he might project them.

EISNER: But he was dealing with a totally different thing.

ADAMS: But do you see what happens when you begin a discussion like that? You begin to split hairs. "Well, you can use photographs, but not in this way." What I find is there are many artists doing many things and each successful artist has found his own tools. Very rarely does an artist accept the tools of another artist. His responsibility does not include responsibility to other artists or to the general public. His responsibility is *to himself*. The tools he uses are the tools he finds. The thing he has to think about is *what is his goal*, not what is his technique.

EISNER: Full agreement there.

ADAMS: He must know what he has to do and then he must find the tools that will make him do that. It doesn't matter what the tools are. So, if an artist finds that he needs photos, then he should use them. But. . .

EISNER: Well. . .

ADAMS: Let me finish.

EISNER: But I'm not arguing that.

ADAMS: But you are. You are because it's under the topic, and people are influenced by it. When I talk about using photos, I say: "Look, any tool is a crutch." Okay. A crutch implies that you are a cripple. If you need to use a tool, *know* that you used the tool as a cripple, and that it's a crutch. Don't pretend it's anything else. The idea is to set your goal and use what it takes to get there and don't let anybody tell you that anything is bad. You have to find yourself as an artist.

EISNER: Of course, I agree, but that's not what I'm talking about. . .

ADAMS: When somebody takes that lecture and pares it down to, "Okay, it's fine to use photographs. . .", then that's where the problem is.

EISNER: *Stop! Stop! You're killing me!*

ADAMS: *(Laughing heartily)* The last thing I say to everybody I talk to is don't listen to me. Whatever I said to you, stick it in your file. . .

EISNER: What you said last, Neal, was the big thing. After teaching for about 10 years I realize I have to be careful about what I say. Too often a statement I've made is taken out of context and six months later it's thrown back at me and I don't recognize it. What we're talking about is how to use photographs. I use them as a. . .

ADAMS: . . .reference tool.

EISNER: Exactly. I was talking in a classroom to those who couldn't draw well. . .they were using photos to copy from. Now, let's get back to the procedure you use. In the writing, what do you do?

ADAMS: I create notes for each individual page—how much I want to have happen in that page.

EISNER: Do you start with a premise or an ending?

ADAMS: I start with an overall plot. I don't believe you can have a story without a plot. That means a beginning, middle and end. They have to be there. They can be there in five sentences, sometimes two. I have to have those few sentences in my mind, if not on paper. If I have that, I'm satisfied. Then I try to break them into segments to give the correct amount of importance to the things in the story. Often, you can crowd at the front or back of a story and then you end up filling. Actually that doesn't happen to me anymore, now that I think of it, because there seems to be a natural sense of flow of the story.

EISNER: You know it after a lot of practice.

ADAMS: Yeah. Then I write notes on the pages because I have to know how much is going to happen on that page. "He does this; he falls down." Then I might make a note to myself, "needs more excitement here, things are getting dull, don't like this."

EISNER: At what point do you put in the dialogue?

ADAMS: Lately I've been putting it in after the pictures. It's the Marvel technique. It's the way Stan and Jack worked.

EISNER: I've never been able to do that. I always had to put my balloons in first.

ADAMS: This is an interesting technique. You can draw a face one way. . .the character is having an argument. Completed, the face leaves you the freedom to make the character sound a little angrier. There's more available to you this way. I try to know how much the character is going to say, and with my notes, I'll have additional dialogue. What it does is spread the writing out so I don't have to do it in one bite. . .So I'll have my first set of notes, then my notes on the page, and then I can put in the dialogue afterward. So I have a third time that I can refine the dialogue.

EISNER: By the time you put the dialogue in, your panel composition is fixed. So then you have to fit your dialogue in. . . A couple of your panels in the stuff you show me here are frankly. . .

ADAMS: . . .a little cramped. I had to cram an awful lot into four pages. I was told I had four pages and my idea was about six pages long. It's a lot of stuff for four pages, but I felt it was worthwhile because if people got into it, they'd end up reading it. It's dialogue heavy, but you make sacrifices. In a full length story, I never have that problem.

EISNER: So the normal pattern is to make your notes on each page and then you rough pencil. Now, how tight is your pencilling?

ADAMS: What I do is a rough layout of the page on a sheet smaller than the final size. . . when I say rough, it's probably pretty tight. It's ¼ page size, quite detailed. Then I photostat up to final art size. I put that under my page and draw over it on a lightbox.

EISNER: You pencil line over it and then you ink it. And your pencil on top of that is fairly tight?

ADAMS: Very tight, but it doesn't have a lot of technique on it; it's mostly form.

EISNER: It's tight but faceless. In this final art here you have a lovely look on this girl biting her lip. Would that have been in your pencil?

ADAMS: It might have been in the sketch. One of the things I found out early is that when you do a sketch, sometimes it has the spontaneity you never get into the finish, so I try different techniques of holding on to that; like I would artograph my sketches. . .an artograph is a kind of projector. But I found I was still losing stuff. I found that if I made tight sketches, then that was really my thinking, so what I really had to do was transfer my thinking to the page.

EISNER: So the inking ultimately becomes a technical application. You could almost go with the pencils to reproduce.

ADAMS: Yeah. The idea all along, the same with the writing, is to constantly make it better and not lose anything. The problem is always losing something.

EISNER: Traditionally, you always lose something in the inking. . .

ADAMS: So the idea was to blow up the sketch to art size and work over it so I never lose anything, and then I add to it.

EISNER: I solved the problem in exactly the opposite way. My pencils are fairly loose. I count on my inking to provide the so-called spontaneity, life and movement. Do you work with a brush or a pen? *[Neal holds up a Pentel]*. What?? *With a MARKER?!!* No kidding.

ADAMS: I never have to dip it in the inkwell.

EISNER: Incredible! I can't work with a marker; I'm a failure with it. I'm a brush man.

ADAMS: You can do anything you want.

EISNER: Oh, I can't. I shouldn't say I can't, right. . .I have worked with a marker, but the line doesn't have any 'life.' I can't get the rhythm, so I prefere working with a brush. A brush has a kind of sensual fluidity for me. Now, I don't like doing backgrounds with a brush; for that, I use a hard quill pen. Anyway, what about coloring?

ADAMS: I have colorists, but I try to guide that.

EISNER: Okay, so much for how you work. We talked about how we both work in different ways and it had to do with our individual philosophies.

ADAMS: Well, it does come down to philosophies. I've come down to using a Pilot and a Pentel after a lot of experimentation. I found they help me in story telling. It briefens the technical difficulties! The idea of keeping the pen clean, the brush pointed, or getting bitched at when my brush is splitting hairs. . .other problems that keep holding me back don't happen with a Pilot and Pentel.

EISNER: Well, then, you don't use any white paint.

ADAMS: No.

EISNER: Then you never make mistakes. . .revisions.

ADAMS: No. I try not to make mistakes, and I hardly ever do.

EISNER: How do you deal with covering the marker? That bleeds through.

ADAMS: Yeah, well I would make a patch. But I hardly ever make mistakes because I have a diagram of the drawing.

EISNER: And your pencils are tight!

ADAMS: Yeah, my hand has to jerk in order for me to make a mistake.

EISNER: Looking at your work, you

seem to be getting feathering here. Remarkable for the equipment.

ADAMS: Well, that's storyboard training. I've used Pilots and Pentels on storyboards and I've picked up a lot.

EISNER: Very good. As a matter of fact, I like what you're doing. It's different than some of the recent stuff I've seen Gil Kane do. He uses a marker, too.

ADAMS: Gil Kane's line is a dead line.

EISNER: I was prepared to think you were working with a pen. For example, this figure here, really soft lines!

ADAMS: Well, I just make the lines look like pen or brush lines. Some of them look like brush lines.

EISNER: That's what I thought. You have real good fluidity. All right, before I get carried away with admiring your work *(chortle)*, I don't want to get into that trap. . .

ADAMS: You might want to cover an area here because it has to do with the history of comics.

EISNER: What is it, *Green Lantern?*

ADAMS: We had done the series and Denny and I had spoken about this drug issue, but we had the Comics Code and nobody could do anything. We had been disobeying the code all along by saying it was possible to question authorities. We knew we'd never be able to do the drug book, so what I did was draw a cover and this character here, Green Arrow, has a ward just like Batman has a ward. His name is Speedy and he's an archer.We had not seen Speedy for 10 issues. Where is he? I drew a cover showing a dark room, Speedy in the foreground, and he has got a hypodermic needle on the table. He's got bags under his eyes. These two guys have just walked in, and the law and order guy says: "You're such a big liberal and you think you know everything, and your ward has become a junkie." It is clear that he has just shot up. I took the cover in and put it on Julie Schwartz's desk. He picks it up and goes "WHA...!" *(laughter)* He says "We can't do this." I said we could. So Carmine comes in and looks and "WHA...! We can't do this." I tell him it's possible to do it, just do it. "We can't do this, it's against the Comics Code." There were some executives from the Kinney Corp. and everybody decided we couldn't do it. I told them Denny could write a good story around that cover. "Would you make Speedy a junkie?" Yeah. "We can't do it! Forget it!" Stan Lee decided a month later that he was going to have a *Spider-Man* story in which some kid pops pills and walks off a building. It was the cartoon of the day that junkies would pop pills and walk off buildings. This generally didn't happen. But Stan did it. He sent it to the code and they denied approval. Stan published the thing with no Comics Code seal. Industry was in an uproar. Everybody at DC was saying we had this thing we *could* have done, so why didn't we...? The code called this meeting and they finally realized the code was outdated. Everybody agreed to change it. It allowed drugs to be covered. It allowed us to talk about issues that were important, blah, blah. . . they changed the code. As soon as they did, Julie Schwartz said: "Do the story, get it done. Goddamn Stan Lee, son of a bitch!" We did a two-part story and Speedy was a junkie.

EISNER: To what kind or reaction?

ADAMS: Very good. There were people who said, "ahh, you guys don't know anything about it." But Denny and I knew a certain amount about it. We had done research for that other project, and we had researched drug rehabilitation centers. We had sessions with ex-addicts for hours. I was, at the time, chairman of the board of a drug rehab center in the Bronx. I was very close to them. I was walking guys in at night; I was finding guys on Times Square and taking them home. I was wiping their noses for them . . .their noses tend to drip. We were close to them. We felt strongly about it, and we wanted to do a good job. Some people wrote and said "It turned us around. It made a big impression on us and we're glad someone is dealing with it."

EISNER: Do you think it's made any changes in the field itself?

ADAMS: It attracted attention to the possible relevance of comics. If you look at the standard run of comics there is a lot more relevance in comics these days, although a lot of criticism was laid at our door for being preachy. You're going to get that.

EISNER: In that regard, Neal, do you feel that this has been your main contribution to this business. . .because you're kind of out of it now. . .

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DC GREEN LANTERN
BIGGER AND BETTER 25c
DC GREEN LANTERN
GREEN ARROW
GREEN LANTERN
CO-STARRING
GREEN ARROW
ONLY 25¢ bigger & better
NO. 85 SEPT. 30210
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
YOU ALWAYS HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS, GREEN ARROW! WELL, WHAT'S YOUR ANSWER TO THAT--?
MY WARD, SPEEDY, IS A JUNKIE!
DC ATTACKS YOUTHS' GREATEST PROBLEM... DRUGS!

DC's reluctance to publish this O'Neil-Adams drug story ended when Marvel published a drug story in 'Spider-Man' 96 (May, 1971) without a code seal.

ADAMS: My contribution is the same one I originally made. I'm a maverick, I don't really belong, but it's my business. So, at the same time I feel a certain mavericknessness, which is a little hard to say at 42, I also feel I own the business. It's part of me and I don't like things to go wrong. I don't like the injustices that happen. I'm proud of the business, I haven't walked away from it. It's my business.

EISNER: No, you haven't walked. . .

ADAMS: Do you see this? This has just been published, with my new cover.

EISNER: "*Green Lantern/Green Arrow.*"

ADAMS: This is the first piece of comic art I've done for any of the companies in five years. This cover represents the end of my own one-man five-year strike. It's been against the work-made-for-hire portion of the new copyright law. This was done under a non-work-made-for-hire agreement. The only one so far. . .

EISNER: How is this done, if you can. .

ADAMS: They were going to reprint the whole series for the direct sale market. They knew it would sell.

EISNER: What is different? You did the cover. . .you don't own the *Green Arrow.* The publisher owns it.

ADAMS: They own it; they can reprint it. They had another artist do a cover because they knew I wouldn't do it. They asked me and I said no, because I consider the work-for-hire agreement unethical. So they tried to find a way around it. Then they went to a sales meeting and discovered that the direct sales people were enthusiastic about the project and assumed I was going to do the cover. They implied, I think very strongly, that if someone else did the cover, it might not sell as well. So they came back and we talked, and we found a way to sign an agreement that gave them almost all the rights they ever wanted anyway, without me signing a work-for-hire agreement.

EISNER: I see. Well, we won't get any further into that. How about *Ms. Mystic*? You own that, that's your property. That you're licensing to Pacific Comics.

ADAMS: Right. Pacific seems to be happy dealing that way.

EISNER: Well, I've seen copies of their general agreement. The way they're dealing, in my opinion, is the way it should be.

ADAMS: I think, to a certain extent, the same thing will happen to DC and Marvel after a certain period. It's moving in that direction.

EISNER: Well, they have a problem. How are they going to give the copyright ownership to a strip on, say, *Spider-Man,* done by another fellow that never created it?

ADAMS: They don't have to do that. There are all kinds of solutions. . .

EISNER: But they are faced with talent asking for participation, Neal, and I think they're willing to deal with it now. It's only a recent development.

ADAMS: They're a little slow. Marvel just reprinted a series of *Avengers* stories that are done in the same kind of package as this [*Green Lantern/Green Arrow* series]. They're selling it for $2.50 and they made no such agreement with me. They had someone else do the cover, and I am fighting that as much as I can. I think

"Advertising pays the bills." Adams' Continuity Associates promotes a comics approach to advertising. At left are three storyboards for Sunrise Coffee. Below, a magazine layout for Q-tips.

these will show the difference between an artist cooperating because he's being given a reasonable deal, and an artist not cooperating because he isn't being given a reasonable deal. Show me a contract.

EISNER: The strongest force behind artists who are seeking to have equity in the product they create, is the direct sales market. Strangely enough, it is the fans who are making the difference. The minute a retailer, a distributor or fans communicate that they'd like—*want*—to see a Neal Adams cover on here, or a story by him, that is the end of the argument. It makes it a new ball game. They must go that way. Add to that the rising competition for talents by new publishing houses, and you have a marketplace for talent.

ADAMS: That makes the difference. It was a long time in coming.

EISNER: It had to happen sooner or later. Talking about that brings us into where it is all going and where *you're* going. Right now, based on what I see, you're an enterprise, a micro-conglomerate. But you're into advertising and that's your major interest.

ADAMS: Not at all. Advertising pays the bills and makes it possible for us to stay in business. It is also a teaching tool for me. I'm learning a lot about the business world, I'm learning about different techniques. I've picked up the technique that I've used for rendering. . .blame it on advertising, because things have to be done very fast. I've become very fast with a Pilot and a Pentel. Also, types of storytelling. Storyboarding is a type of storytelling and it's sometimes more clear than comic books. Comic books tend to get wrapped up in technique and a lot of things that have nothing to do with telling stories, so it gives me more choices. Advertising also has moved me into working with people because of the studio. I work with other people and delegate responsibilities. Doing that has made me more flexible. Artists tend to want to do every piece of their own stuff. I want all my stuff to be good, but I'm willing to let other people work on it. Getting into a studio like this, and learning over the last 10 years how to deal with people, makes it possible to consider writing and directing movies, in which a lot of responsibility is taken out of my hands. A lot of other things are taken out of my hands, but now I know how to control the project. As an artist, working by myself, I would have a great deal of difficulty with that because I would either let it go and assume it would go wrong, or want to do everything myself. Now I know how to let it go but still keep it good. Let other people do their jobs and tell them it's right when it's right, and wrong when it's wrong, and

not get on their bad side. I now consider myself a writer-director after having written and directed one movie that isn't finished yet. But that's how I think of myself. Actually, I think of myself as a storyteller.

EISNER: You're moving into movies then? What about *Ms. Mystic* and publishing.

ADAMS: Well, it's not coming out that often. It seems like nearly a year between the first and second issue, but they are making it flexible for me. I'm having other writers and artists get involved in projects that we're doing on the publishing end. We're also creating projects, graphic novels and comic books to take and sell as movie projects. I like the idea of creating imagination on film. All the guys doing this are movie makers. Nobody is a comic book artist. You have George Lucas making comic books on film. I want to do it. So I am stockpiling material. I've got graphic novels done. I'm working on projects that are scripts for potential movies. So I'm making the switch but I'm not stepping out of the comics field. In effect, there is not much difference.

EISNER: It's a movie on paper.

ADAMS: I think people who do storyboards are comic book artists or movie makers, and I just want to do movies. It's my big toy. I made a movie to learn how to do it. Now I'm going to make others. I hope my first movie will be successful. It's not a big budget movie but it's pretty good.

EISNER: A regular 90 minute. . .?

ADAMS: Yeah. It's not bad. We've sent our brochures to distributors. When we have it finished we'll get it shown. And everybody will say, Neal Adams the movie director, because nobody knows the comic book artist.

EISNER: Let me just go back again to the early Johnstone-Cushing days, because that's where you worked with Lou Fine. I lost touch with Lou after he left the old Will Eisner Production Studio right after World War II. I never saw Lou again. Did you know him at all? Did you work with him?

ADAMS: It was hard to get close to Lou at the time I knew him. He seemed to have a lot of personal family problems and they made him sad. He had a very sad outlook on things and his work had gone from being very alive to being very deadly and well-drawn. . .I would sit and watch his facility.

EISNER: Did you work with him?

ADAMS: He worked at Johnstone's on and off. He had the ability to sit down and draw a picture. He didn't take references out. He'd just start drawing and a picture would appear. The only other person I've seen do that is Russ Heath, who would start at the back hoof of a horse and just draw a silhouette and then come back to the same place and have a horse. Lou Fine didn't quite do that, but to a young artist, he was incredibly fast. He would make pictures happen but they were always sort of quiet. He seemed as though somebody had pulled the plug and drained a lot of him out. He had a shy smile and he would talk. . .I don't think he admitted to whoever he worked with. . .he didn't like to admit that he was in comic books.

EISNER: I think he was disappointed in comic books. When I left he fell into the hands of Busy Arnold [my partner], when I was in the Army, and Lou got batted back and forth between me and Busy.

ADAMS: Well, at the time I knew him, that time in the industry was terrible. I thought I'd meet people who were proud of what they did. Nobody I met was proud.

EISNER: You're so right.

ADAMS: If somebody asked what they did, they'd say, "oh, I'm an illustrator." If people asked me what I did, I'd say "I draw comic books!" One of the things I did early in my comic book career, after I finished the strip, was become a cheerleader. I'd say "this stuff is great!" I yelled at people for throwing out artwork. I'd got into a big hassle with the DC people. They'd wait three issues and then throw the artwork out, and I just stormed around the office yelling. This guy would be in the production room, and he'd be slicing pages so they'd fit in the garbage can. I'd constantly talk to guys who were ashamed. Part of forming the Academy or the Guild was to try and get people to be proud of what they were doing. People would say it was awful, and they'd go through embarrassing experiences. At a party, they'd say they did comic books and they'd never be able to defend it, you know, people would attack it.

EISNER: How often, at a social party, I'd say I was a comic book artist and they'd say "how nice. . ." or "how interesting. . ." in that cold manner.

ADAMS: Well, answers are always funny. My favorite is "I didn't think they were actually drawn, I thought they just sort of appeared." [Will laughs]. That reaction doesn't bother me so much; it's the reaction of shame. People were ashamed because of what happened in the '50s. They wanted to just get away from it. The publishers were ashamed. . .I couldn't believe it.

EISNER: To some degree it has existed up to the last few years. Often when I met an artist I'd known in comics and asked him how he was doing, he'd say, "Well, I've moved on up. I'm painting now!" to convey the idea that he'd moved up.

ADAMS: You go to Europe and it's totally different. The best thing you can do to a comic book artist is send him to Europe.

EISNER: I discovered that in the early '60s. The shock of it. . .Harvey Kurtzman and I often talk about it. In Europe, people would think being a comic book artist was great. To them it was a valid art form. Very encouraging.

ADAMS: Artists would say, "why do you take so long on a page? Are you trying to make every panel a masterpiece?"

EISNER: Here in the states they looked down on themselves. You ain't gonna win a prize, they'd say.

ADAMS: One day!

EISNER: What's happening now is the technology is forcing it. The knowledge that comic books are retailing at respectable prices and the content is filled with beautiful art makes it a package to be reckoned with. The content is growing in quality. Subject matter is widening. Also, I attribute growth to the so-called direct market, where the audience is selective. Historically, we will see this as the greatest thing to have happened to people like you and me. Now for the first time, it has given us an audience that will select us on the basis of what we have to say.

ADAMS: Which will make us more individual.

EISNER: That's the whole thing. You see, I've been blaming the writers and artists as much as the publishers for the awful stuff turned out over the years. The artists and writers haven't delivered. The publishers can't create anything; they simply package and take things to market. In the end, it's the creator who comes up with the product.

ADAMS: Here's something. . .I did this four page teaser. I've had at least three artists stop me and say, "what are people's reactions to that?" Well, they seemed to like it. "I've wanted to do stuff about things but it just seems like nobody wants it." Well, what's the problem?

EISNER: I get that as a question all the time and the answer is, you can't do it. When they say to you *'they'*, won't let me, I point out to them that out there are 50-60 small one-man publishing houses perfectly willing to do it. But they say they won't get the page rates. Now you've hit it.

ADAMS: Right. That's where it's at.

EISNER: That's the big difference. But the opportunity for new work is out there. For those who will risk it.

ADAMS: They once did a thing at DC where they called kids in and they interviewed them about the kinds of comic books they'd like to see. They'd take them into a room and they'd "rap" with them, the executives. They took me in because I knew how to talk to kids. I wouldn't say things like "let's rap." *(laughter)* So they're asking these kids, and the kids would say "I'd like to see Batman be stronger and Wonder Woman do more things." The executives would walk out and they'd say "I can't figure out what they're saying. They want our characters to be more powerful." I told them they didn't want any of that. You don't ask the audience what they want to see. You give a person the freedom to give them something they'll enjoy. If the audience knew what they wanted, they wouldn't be an audience. They want to be surprised.

EISNER: Exactly. As you're getting into publishing, you'll discover that this is one of the things that will keep you awake at night.

ADAMS: That's why Frank Miller can do what he's doing. He realized at an early enough age that if he just did something well, whatever it was, they'd buy it and go with it. . .because they don't know what's good. It's not their jobs.

EISNER: Of course, it's always heartbreaking to the young artist who goes up to see somebody on the publishing side who says "give me something new." So the kid goes back home, creates something new and the guy says "sorry, that's too new. We can't publish it." . . .All right, I think we've gone far enough on this thing. Thank you very much.

ADAMS: My pleasure.

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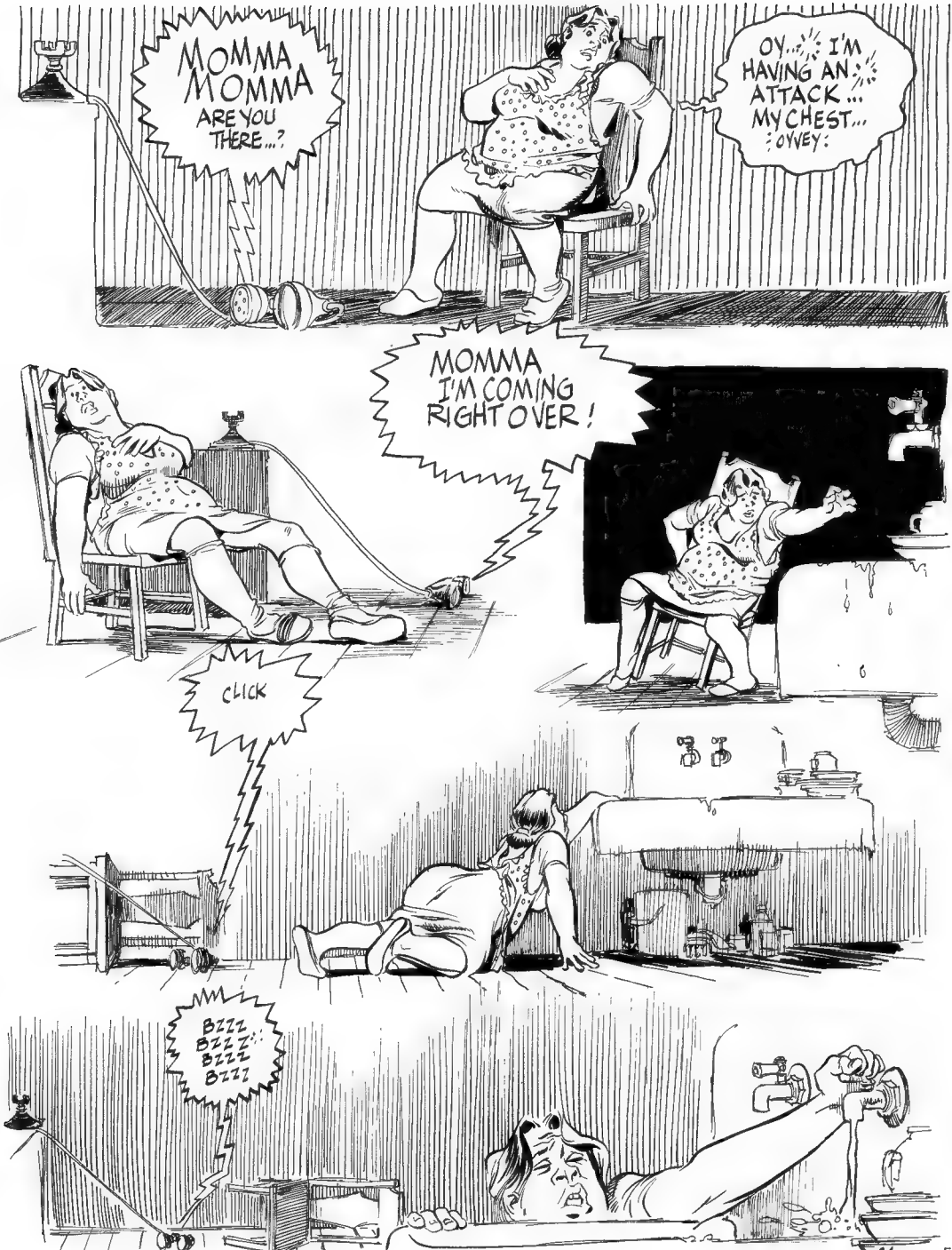
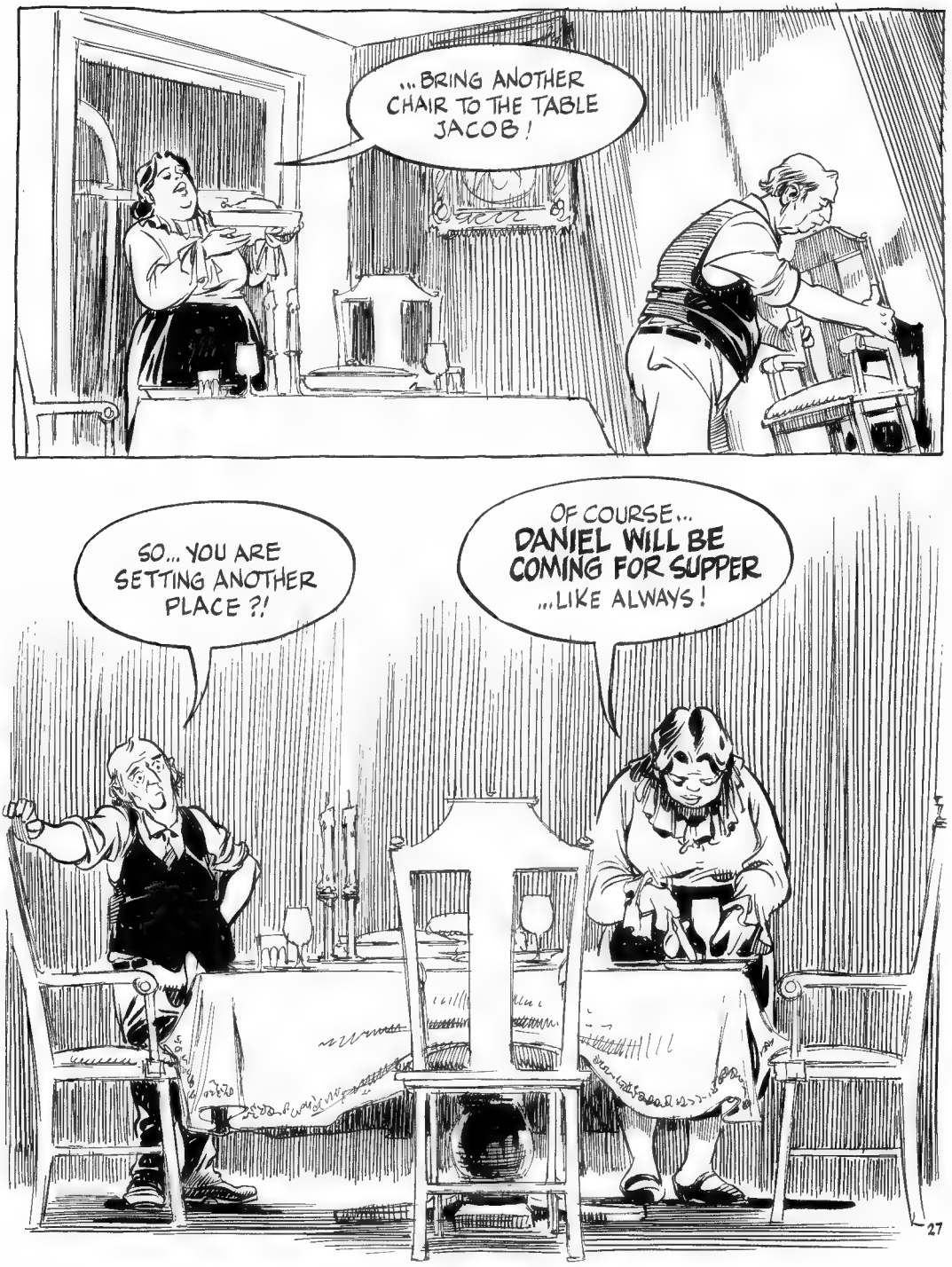
MOMMA.. TAKE ONE OF THOSE PILLS I GAVE YOU... IT'LL REDUCE THE TENSION
YEAH...YEAH...MISTER DOCTOR! WHAT WILL REDUCE MY TENSIONS IS TO HEAR THAT YOU WILL GIVE UP THAT...THAT..NURSE...DANNELEH.. WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME??!
WHAT HAVE I GOT TO LIVE FOR?...MY CHILDREN ARE ALL I HAVE IN THE WORLD! ...WHY SHOULD I GO ON LIVING?!...FOR WHAT I ASK YOU?!...TO, MAYBE, SEE A BEAUTIFUL BOY THROW HIMSELF AWAY ON A...
MOMMA, MOMMA, YOU NEVER MET HER! WELL, YOU MIGHT AS WELL FACE IT....I WILL MARRY THERESA AND WE'LL BRING UP OUR CHILDREN AS WE SEE FIT! P-E-R-I-O-D
MOMMA??..
23

(continued from page 24)


MOMMA MOMMA ARE YOU THERE...?
OY...I'M HAVING AN ATTACK... MY CHEST... OYVEY!
MOMMA I'M COMING RIGHT OVER!
CLICK
BZZZ BZZZ BZZZ BZZZ
24.

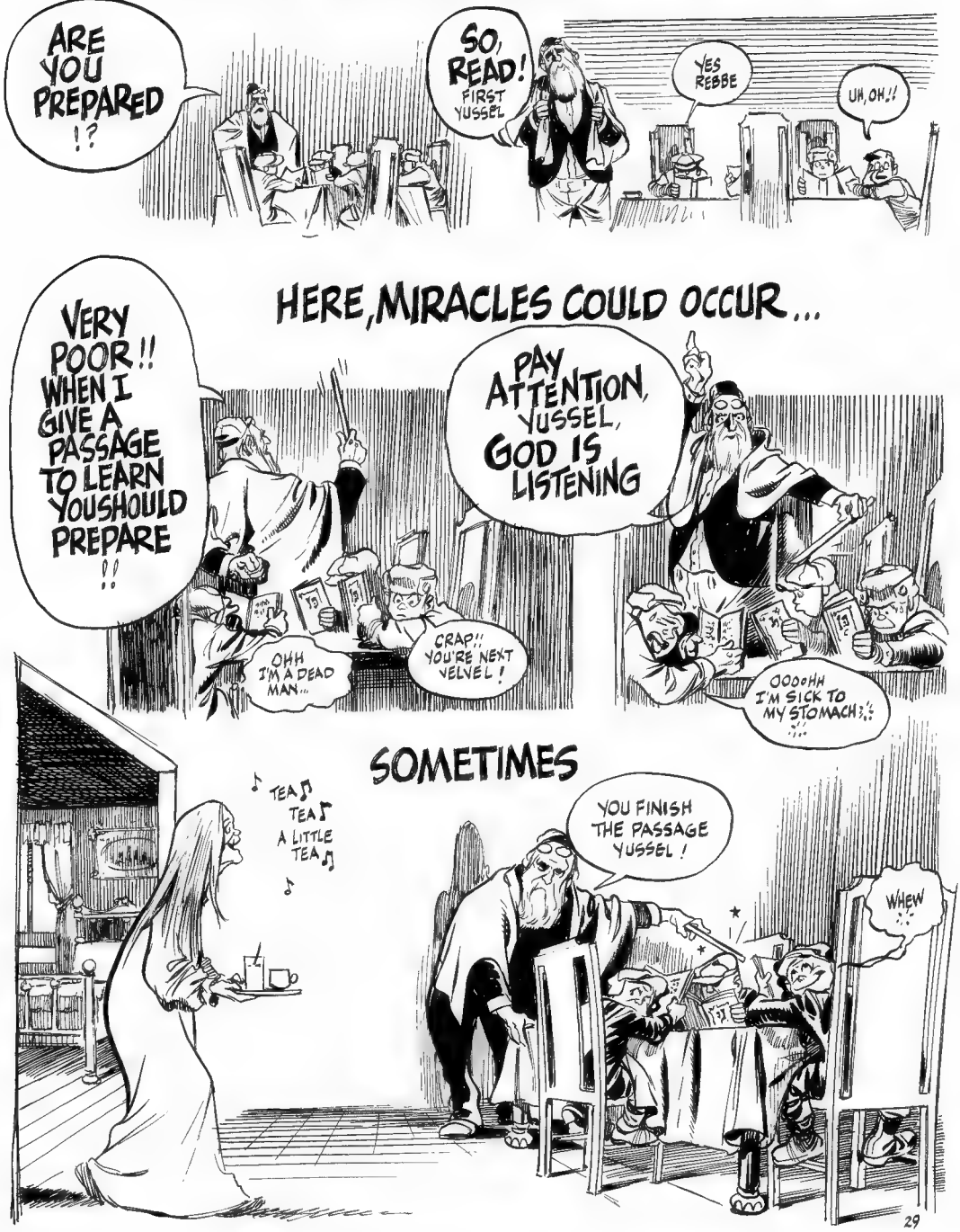
BZZZ BZZZ BZZZ BZZ
BZZZ BZZZ BZZZ BZZZ
SLAM!
CLICK
I'M HOME RIFKE
IS THAT YOU, JACOB? SO, HOW WAS TODAY?
25

HOW SHOULD IT BE?? I SPENT THE WHOLE DAY IN LINE AT THE CARPENTERS UNION HALL
SO??
SO... NOTHING GOODNIGHT
NO JOBS!! NOT EVEN A LITTLE PART TIME!
TOMORROW, I'LL SIGN UP TO SHOVEL SNOW... BUT WITH MY LUCK IT'LL RAIN!
WITH YOUR HEART JACOB?? YOU'RE CRAZY I WONT LET YOU!! I DON'T WANT TO BE A WIDOW, YET!
SO, HOW'S REBECCA... DID YOU HEAR FROM DANIEL?
REBECCA IS TEACHING IN NIGHT SCHOOL TONIGHT...
SHE'S A GOOD DAUGHTER, ...WORKS HARD.
AHYE.... SIGH CHILDREN..... ...CHILDREN...
IT SAYS HERE PEOPLE ARE LIVING LONGER... EVEN WITH THE DEPRESSION!


...BRING ANOTHER CHAIR TO THE TABLE JACOB!
SO... YOU ARE SETTING ANOTHER PLACE?!
OF COURSE... DANIEL WILL BE COMING FOR SUPPER ...LIKE ALWAYS!
27

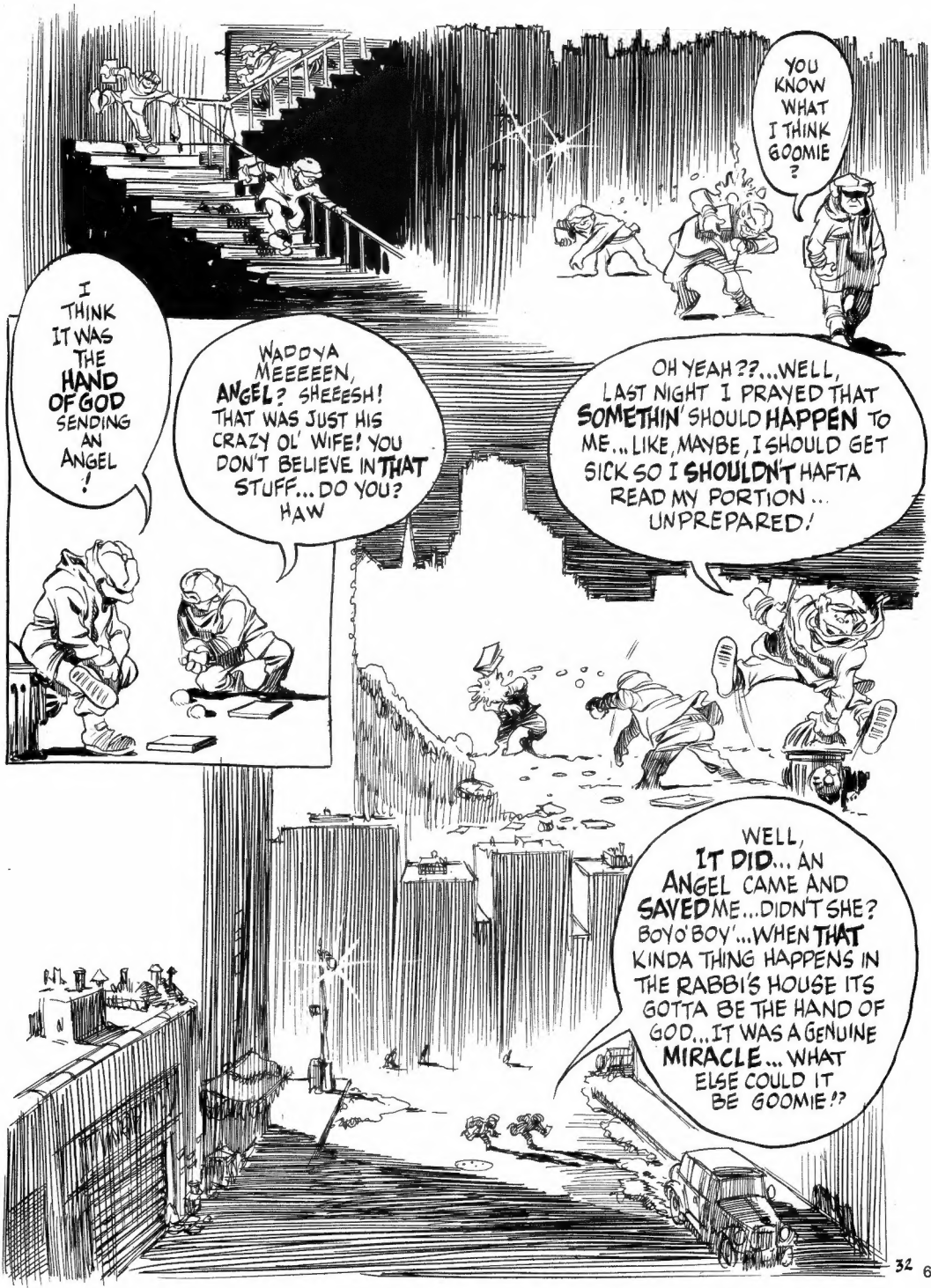
CHAPTER 3.
ON THE TOP FLOOR, BACK, LIVED GOD

ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOONS HEBREW LESSONS AND PREPARATION FOR BAR MITZVAH WERE CONDUCTED BY RABBI BENSOHN AT REDUCED PRICES FOR THOSE WHO COULD NOT AFFORD THE CHEDER.
SO... TODAY, FOR A CHANGE, YOU ARE ON TIME!
OOW, JEEZ, GOOMIE..!! WOT'LL I DO? ...I DINT STUDY MY LESSON... I'M-GONNA BE MOIRDERED !!
SO, PRAY FER A MIRACLE, VELVEL !! C'MON...
28


TO SIT AT THE FEET OF GOD IS AWESOME
ARE YOU PREPARED !?
SO, READ! FIRST YUSSEL
YES REBBE
UH, OH!!
HERE, MIRACLES COULD OCCUR...
VERY POOR !! WHEN I GIVE A PASSAGE TO LEARN YOUSHOULD PREPARE !!
PAY ATTENTION, YUSSEL, GOD IS LISTENING
OHH I'M A DEAD MAN...
CRAP!! YOU'RE NEXT VELVEL!
OOOoHH I'M SICK TO MY STOMACH
SOMETIMES
TEA TEA A LITTLE TEA
YOU FINISH THE PASSAGE YUSSEL!
WHEW

BUT, ITS VELVEL'S TURN....
A LITTLE TEA
I SAID, YOU FINISH THE PASSAGE
TEE HEE HEE
SHUT UP, GOOMIE!
SEE THEY WANTED A LITTLE TEA

YES, YES... COME... YOU SHOULDN'T BE OUT OF YOUR ROOM.. PLEASE
SEE ♪ I MADE THE CHILDREN TEA ♫
YES, THAT'S NICE... BUT CHILDREN SHOULDN'T DRINK TEA! COME... BECKELEH... DON'T CRY, IT'S ALRIGHT..
BUT... WHY CAN'T I SIT OUTSIDE TOO ?
KNOK KNOK
REBBE ...YOU ASKED ME TO COME UP?
YES, JACOB, I HAVE SOMETHING TO TALK WITH YOU
...CHILDREN, YOU CAN GO HOME NOW! THAT'S ALL TODAY... NEXT WEEK PREPARE !!
JACOB... I ADMIRED THE BUILDING YOU MADE FOR THE SHUL! I WANT YOU SHOULD BUILD ME AN EXTRA ROOM FOR BECKELEH, SO SHE CAN BE SAFE ...YOU KNOW, SHE'S.. AH, NOT RIGHT AND IF YOU CAN DO IT FOR ME CHEAP, IT'LL BE A MITZVAH...
IT SO HAPPENS I GOT PLENTY TIME JUST NOW... TO TELL THE TRUTH, ITS A BLESSING BOTH WAYS!


YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK GOOMIE?
I THINK IT WAS THE HAND OF GOD SENDING AN ANGEL!
WADDYA MEEEEEN, ANGEL? SHEEESH! THAT WAS JUST HIS CRAZY OL' WIFE! YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN THAT STUFF... DO YOU? HAW
OH YEAH??...WELL, LAST NIGHT I PRAYED THAT SOMETHIN' SHOULD HAPPEN TO ME... LIKE, MAYBE, I SHOULD GET SICK SO I SHOULDN'T HAFTA READ MY PORTION... UNPREPARED!
WELL, IT DID... AN ANGEL CAME AND SAVED ME... DIDN'T SHE? BOY O' BOY'... WHEN THAT KINDA THING HAPPENS IN THE RABBI'S HOUSE ITS GOTTA BE THE HAND OF GOD... IT WAS A GENUINE MIRACLE... WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE GOOMIE!?

HOW EVER MANKIND DEALT WITH ITS SURVIVAL, THERE REMAINED YET ANOTHER FORCE, MIGHTY AND IMPLACABLE, THE WEATHER!

JANUARY, 1934, ARRIVED TO A SLUSHY NEW YORK. It began mildly. A warm wave thawed the accumulation of snow that was deposited on the city in the month before. Firemen had to be called out to deal with floods caused by suddenly-thawed sprinklers in over 200 buildings. Meanwhile, 40,000 were given work to clear the snow. In the New York Harbor, fog, resulting from the sudden warmth, delayed ship traffic.

JANUARY ENDED IN SUDDEN COLD! The mercury dropped 52 degrees in one day and the thermometers of the city stood at 5 degrees above zero with icy winds and snow flurries swirling around the buildings.

FEBRUARY BEGAN AFTER THREE DAYS OF BITTER COLD. Warm winds brought relief, just briefly, for a heavy snowfall buried the city! While 2000 worked at shovelling streets and 20,000 out-of-work people eagerly awaited a chance for a job, bad news came from the Bronx! At the Bronx Zoo the groundhogs failed to come out! Those who counted on these creatures to predict spring were bitterly disappointed. Then the temperature dropped to 15 degrees and a pile-up of 9.6 inches of snow giving employment to the 20,000 jobless at snow removal.

ON FEBRUARY 2, THERE WAS OTHER GOOD NEWS! Up in the Bronx Zoo the groundhog finally came out, saw his shadow, and promptly scurried back to his nest. It was clearly a portend of an early spring. But by the day's end the mercury dropped to 4 degrees . . . a record for this date.

ON FEBRUARY 3RD ICE FLOES RAMPANT ON THE HUDSON RIVER! Propelled by the currents they dragged three ships for twenty blocks from their anchorage.

ON FEBRUARY 13 THE CITY WAS LASHED BY A BITTER GALE FOLLOWED BY A HEAVY SNOWFALL! Within eleven hours the mercury dropped 20 degrees. On the rivers the Coast Guard struggled to save men on barges adrift on the icy waters. But the snowfall gave work to 6000 jobless men hired to clean streets.

ON FEBRUARY 15, N.Y. BRACED FOR ANOTHER COLD. The New York Times reported that a cold wave was coming from the Rocky Mountains and that an unemployed man was found dead of the cold alongside a bunkmate who was unconscious. The following day the paper reported that the first half of February was the coldest in the 63 years of the New York City Weather Bureau's records.

ON FEBRUARY 20, THE CITY WAS HIT AGAIN! After almost a week of wavering the mercury dropped to 9 degrees above zero and a 9-inch snowfall immobilized the city. For hours the suburbs were cut off. Suburbanites in snow shoes and skies were also using horses and sleds to get around.

ON FEBRUARY 22, N.Y. WAS PINIONED BY SNOW! The city's newspapers carried stories of milk being delivered to the suburbs by plane. In the city itself 50,000 people were at work digging out. Slowly, commuters were able to get back to work. In the New York Times an expert, Mr. Raubenheimer, called the storm ". . . a carbon copy of the Blizzard of 1888."

BY FEBRUARY 27, THE CITY TRIED TO FREE ITSELF! After a day or two of rising and falling temperature which caused icy streets that was soon covered by a 9-inch snowfall, the papers carried reports that some Long Island and New Jersey communities were cut off from the city. In Manhattan hotels were jammed with snowbound commuters. Only the busses were running. Nine storm-related injuries were reported. The following day the total fatalities related to the thermometer rose to 14. Stores announced that skis and earmuffs sold out! The mercury dropped to 9 degrees above zero but the city somehow averted a coal and food shortage, fed its park animals, while in Westchester County the roads were cleared.

MARCH CAME IN LIKE A LAMB THIS YEAR. With a 15 degree rise in temperature which caused a thaw that melted the accumulated ice, water flooded the streets of the city.

ON APRIL 24, THE CITY FELT THE FIRST THUNDERSTORM OF THE YEAR!

BY MAY 21, THE CITY SWELTERED! A record heat of 88 degrees Farenheit roasted the city and left one heat prostration case. This was followed by hail, rain and lightning which caused damage and resulted in 3 prostrations within 72 hours.

JULY ARRIVED WITH THE MERCURY AT 91 DEGREES. Within the next three days 13 more heat prostrations and 5 deaths were reported in the press before a rainstorm finally brought a short relief. But the mercury hovered at over 92 degrees for the next eight days leaving about 12 overcome and 3 dead.

ST. SWITHEN'S DAY WAS SULTRY and ended in showers.

JULY ENDED WITH THE MERCURY AT 89 DEGREES. A count of the heat-related casualties which the New York Times reported for the month came to 29 prostrations and 11 deaths. Two heat records were set they said.

AUGUST BEGAN, RECORDING THE COOLEST AUGUST 6 IN HISTORY. At the end of the month, after zooming up to 95 degrees, the month ended with the coolest day in August's history.

FINALLY, BY DECEMBER New York returned to a seasonal norm and a light snow powdered the rooftops.

* * * *

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